UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

ADOLESCENT ROMANCE NOVELS: CHANGES OVER TIME

BY

TAMI M. BERESKA

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

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Abstract

The relationship between popular culture and the social world has been well-established in the literature. Consequently, research regarding the specific nature of that relationship, when considering particular popular cultural forms, has become more prevalent during the last several decades. It is only in the last decade, however, that popular cultural forms targeted at and consumed by women have merited research. Research on the popular cultural forms targeted at adolescent girls is even more lacking. The present research begins to address this lack. The year 1980 brought the introduction of a new, and initially very successful, popular cultural form to the adolescent market--the adolescent series romance novel. By the end of that same decade, the genre had a much declined presence in the marketplace. The research reported here involves the content analyses of (a) adolescent series romance novels, both those out of print and still in print, (b) adult series romance novels, and (c) adolescent soap opera series romance novels. When the content analyses were compared to each other in relation to changing social conditions in the adolescent culture of the 1980s, one central issue was found to be salient--sexuality. The central hypothesis of this research is that the sexual content of teen series romance novels can explain the genre's decline. North American society became more sexualized during the 1980s, and adolescent series romance novels failed to accommodate this change; adolescent soap opera series romance novels did accommodate this change. In addition,

the greater experience of parental divorce by these girls likely created concerns about the meaning of sexuality and the future of heterosexual relations. Once again, adolescent series romances failed to accommodate these concerns; adult series romances did accommodate these concerns. It is therefore suggested that adolescent girls began to increasingly consume soap opera series romances and adult series romances, with a concomitant decline in teen series romance consumption. The message that girls are receiving from the romance novels they are currently consuming is that finding Mr. Right makes life complete, although the search may be fraught with difficulties.

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INTRODUCTION

The field of popular culture is an increasingly important area of study in the social sciences. Popular culture is a substantial part of daily life, with such a large amount of time spent consuming it, that it is evident "people live through culture, not alongside it" (Chambers, 1986, p.13). Butler and Paisley (1980) report that media account for about half of the daily communication input of the average American. The typical adult spends five hours each day consuming popular culture, with printed culture such as newspapers, magazines, and books taking up one hour each day, and radio or television taking up four hours each day. Among adolescents the consumption of popular culture is even more extensive. Adolescents spend more time consuming popular culture each day than doing anything else except sleeping.

A substantial part of the popular culture consumption of adolescent girls, which was introduced in 1980, was the teen series romance novel, which had astounding popularity. Romance novels featuring adolescent characters have been present in the book market since at least the 1940s. It was in 1980, however, that the adolescent series romance novel (an equivalent to the adult "Harlequin's") was created. By the mid-1980s there were more than twelve adolescent series romance lines on the market (Christian-Smith, 1987, 1988). By the end of the decade, however, the majority of these lines were no longer being published. What was it that stimulated this teen romance movement, and what was the cause of the genre's declined presence in the marketplace? Was

there something in its content in relation to the social world and changing social conditions of the 1980s that could have initiated a change in adolescent literary consumption patterns? If increasingly fewer adolescent girls were reading the teen series romance novel, why was this the case, and what other popular cultural forms might have taken its place in the lives of teenage girls? Finally, what are the potential consequences for gender socialization of changed popular cultural patterns among this population? These are the questions that this research explores.

In any study of popular culture, there are deep roots within another tradition--the study of art in general, and its relationship with the social world. Chapter 1 examines the underlying theories within this tradition, and their relation to the study of popular culture.

Chapter 2 begins with an examination of the study of gender. It then develops into a review of the study of gender in popular culture, and the relation of romance to gender and the lives of adolescent girls.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology used in this study, a content analysis of 39 romance novels of various types. The content analysis checklist used in this research is presented in this chapter.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the content analysis. The results of each of the lines examined, according to the content analysis checklist, will be presented in turn.

In chapter 5, the results of the content analysis will be

related to social conditions of adolescent girls of the 1980s, in order to explain what reading changes have likely occurred, and why. This research proposes that a greater prominence of sexuality in the lives of adolescents of the 1980s motivated girls to read another type of teen series romance, the soap opera series romance line, "Sweet Valley High", rather than the adolescent series romances. It is suggested that when the issue of sexuality is combined with the greater experience of parental divorce by current generations of adolescents, and the resulting changes in family dynamics, there are indications of a movement of girls to reading adult series romances--these novels provided girls of divorced parents with the fulfillment of the sex-love link, and addressed their concerns about their futures regarding heterosexual relationships.

Chapter 6 examines the potential consequences of the suggested reading changes on the gender-role socialization of adolescent readers. The focus is on the novels' orientations toward and portrayals of feminism, careers, education, romance, physical appearance, and women in relation to men. Chapter 7 concludes this research project.

The issue of the popular culture consumption of adolescents, particularly girls, has been essentially ignored by social researchers. This is particularly problematic given the potential influences of their consumption, at a time when the social concerns regarding adolescents are widespread--education, career choice, teenage pregnancy, and gender-role development. This research

hopes to provide a starting position in the study of related issues, if not to answer questions, then perhaps at least to raise questions that future research may choose to address.

CHAPTER 1

ART, SOCIETY, AND POPULAR CULTURE

The study of art is a long-standing tradition. However, the ways that art has been studied have varied to some extent over time and across particular art forms. Historically, the analysis of art has been largely the province of art experts, critics, and historians. An important tradition in Western art theory has been the idea of art as a result of individual, creative genius, transcending both time and place. There were two general methods used in this approach (Witte, 1941). The first method was the historical/biographical method, in which the creator, or the "genius" was considered central. It involved the analysis of the creator's works, background, and life. The second method used was the pure aesthetics method, in which the piece of art itself was given centrality, regardless of the particular creator behind it. In both analyses the sociological explanation of art, the artist, and creativity is absent.

Sociological approaches recognize the existence of relationships between art and society, and regard the idea of artistic genius as something to be explained rather than accepted as given. A dominant perspective in the sociology of art has been that of historical materialism, which suggests that institutions play a role only within a specific historical context (Cappon, 1978). Thus, an historical materialist analysis of literature examines it in terms of the historical conditions that produce it (Eagleton, 1976).

Historical materialism has its roots in Marxism and the Marxist discussion of aesthetics. The centrality of Marxism particularly to the literature-society issue is widely acknowledged, even by non-Marxists (Hall, Hobson, Lowe & Willis, 1980). Marx was not the first to insist that art was a social product that must be accounted for in terms of history; a number of philosophers, Hegel, for example, held a similar position (Eagleton, 1976). Marxism's contribution lies in its understanding of history itself (Eagleton, 1976). The Marxists recognized that the traditional art history approach was an ideological position, and that, in fact, art itself was ideological (Wolff, 1981). The basic Marxist argument is that the mode of production creates social relations which shape consciousness and the resulting ideas and works (Williams, 1971; Eagleton, 1976).

In her book The Social Production of Art, Janet Wolff (1981) examines in detail the Marxist perspective on the relationship of art to society and the manner in which art is ideological. Among the several interpretations of Marx's theory of ideology, Wolff uses that which states that "the ideas and beliefs people have are systematically related to their actual and material conditions of existence" (p.50). Material conditions are a result of material activity, which satisfies basic human needs; arising out of material activity is communication about and planning of such activity (i.e. thought and consciousness). As societies become more complex with an increasing division of labour, certain sectors of the population are able to satisfy certain basic needs for

everyone; this provides some people with more free time for "thought and consciousness", giving rise to the creation of ideologies and the creation of art.

An ideology consists of a constellation of what Marx labelled ideological forms of a particular group. Ideological forms include ideas, cultural values, and religious beliefs, as well as the cultural institutions that embody them, such as schools, and the cultural artifacts that represent them. Art is such an artifact, and artistic forms include painting, literature, music, and drama.

Thus, works of art, as with all ideological forms:

> are not closed, self-contained and transcendental entities, but are the product of specific historical practices on the part of identifiable social groups in given conditions and therefore bear the imprint of the ideas, values and conditions of existence of those groups, and their representatives in particular artists. (Wolff, 1981, p.49)

In Marxist terminology, ideological forms, including art, comprise society's superstructure, which is a function of society's base --the mode of production and resulting conditions of material existence. The ruling class, which is in control of the mode of production, also controls the ideology that dominates a society and thereby determines the artistic forms present in that society (Albrecht, 1954; Wolff, 1981).

The Marxist notion of art as ideology initially gave rise to simple reflection theory, which provides a description of the art-society relationship. Stated simply, the content of art provides a reflection of society's base, or economic system.

The rejection of Marx's fundamental materialism led to the postulation of other theories of the art-society relationship,

which were still able to fit into the reflection paradigm, by focusing on additional economic, social, and political structures rather than solely on the mode of production.

The most common theory contained within the reflection paradigm (Albrecht, 1954) is that which postulates that because art is socially, economically, and politically determined, it reflects the most predominant cultural values and norms (Albrecht, 1954, 1956; Williams, 1971; Knights, 1948). Support for this perspective was found by Albrecht (1956) in an analysis of short stories from various magazines and their comparison with dominant American values regarding the family. He found that in general, dominant norms and values were reflected in the literature (i.e. in 91.98% of the short stories).

A second version of reflection theory is that art reflects certain social facts, for example, the characteristics of heroines in novels will parallel those of the female population in general (Albrecht, 1954). Testing of this theory, however, has found that social facts tend to be distorted in art (Becker, 1969; Albrecht, 1954), and that the distortion tends to be in the direction of what are perceived in society as ideals (Inglis, 1938; Albrecht, 1954). Thus, art may reflect social ideals rather than social facts.

Two other variants of reflection theory have been proposed. The first is that art reflects the general attitudes of a culture. The second is a psychological variant, stating that art reflects "the stress patterns and emotional needs of audiences, arising out of shared cultural and social life" (Albrecht, 1954, p.106).

The criticism that the world has become too complex for such simple relationships to exist has led today's proponents of reflection theory to reject these over-simplified versions (Wolff, 1981). The current proposition is that the relationship between art and society is not direct, but is mediated through social groups and their consciousness. Thus, more complex versions of reflection theory describe art as determined by structures, but then mediated by the existence and composition of social groups, and the nature and interrelationships of ideologies and consciousness. One must look, then, not at society as a whole, but at a certain aspect of society and/or a certain social group (Meyersohn, 1969; Mueller, 1935; Rosenblatt, 1946; Watt, 1964).

Even these more complex versions of reflection theory are problematic, however, because the relationship portrayed is still wholly unidirectional and they assume that ideologies are still eventually reflected in art. One cannot accept unquestioningly that art reflects reality, because each author or creator has a personal and somewhat individualized social experience (Wellek & Warren, 1949; Watt, 1964). As society has become increasingly complex, reflection has become even more difficult because such complexity reduces the representativeness of the creator's experience. Art may reflect some surface characteristics of society, in the loosest sense, but "with various degrees of indirectness and selectivity" (Watt, 1964, p.129). As a result, before accepting that there is a reflection of reality, one must know from other sources the true characteristics of the society or social group being portrayed (Wellek & Warren, 1949).

Before completely rejecting reflection theory, however, it must be recognized that its Marxist proponents were the first to direct attention to the social and cultural dimensions of art, and away from the notion of personal inspiration transcending time and place (Albrecht, 1954). For example, in an analysis of literature, we must look at more than symbolism and literary history, as the mainstream literary critics often do. We must examine the relations between the literary work and the ideological world (Eagleton, 1976). Understanding literature involves understanding the social process of which it is a part.

The transcendence of the limits of reflection theory required a recognition of the relative autonomy of artistic works, which was initially postulated by Althusser, who modified Marxist theory to compensate for its perceived weaknesses. Althusser stated that the superstructure, of which artistic forms are a part, has relative autonomy--it is not entirely determined by the base, and therefore has some independence from it. According to Althusser, levels of the superstructure may even have their own "effectivities". Althusser thought, however, that the base is still determinant in the end.

> Although different superstructural levels--the political, the ideological, the religious, and so on--have their own "effectivities", including that of a reciprocal action back on the base, it is ultimately the economic--the mode of production--which determines when this occurs, and how. (cited in Wolff, 1981, p.82)

Althusser's work stimulated a movement away from reflection theory, and has been influential in more recent sociology of art discussions. Eagleton (1976) suggests that literature is somewhat

distanced from ideology. Literature is created within an ideology, but because literature can be studied it can reveal the limits of the ideology. Taken a step further, Cappon (1978) explains that literature has relative autonomy because it is open to some interpretation--meanings are not clear cut. Thus, even though literary works are subject to the same material conditions as other things, they maintain some independence. It is difficult to tell whether literary works are expressing support for or dissent from values of the prevailing ideology. As a result, the potential exists for literature to play a role in social control or in social change.

These two elements signify the evolution of historical materialism from traditional Marxism. Whereas the focus of traditional Marxism was on the reflective properties of art, an historical materialist analysis focuses on the role literature plays in (a) reinforcing the status quo (i.e. social control), and (b) motivating social change.

Proponents of social control theory postulate that the function of art is to confirm and reinforce cultural norms, attitudes, and beliefs, in short, to maintain the status quo (MacDonald, 1953; Gans, 1966; Albrecht, 1954; Eagleton, 1976; Cappon, 1978). One explanation of the process through which this occurs, found in Marcuse's work, is the idea of the "affirmative character of culture"--

> The arts may express and depict great inequalities and suffering, but because these are transposed on to the aesthetic level, they simply act in a cathartic manner, and in the process affirm the existing social relations. (cited in Wolff, 1981, p.89)

Art products are seen to promote political acquiescence due to the provision of false resolutions of conflict.

A second explanation of the social control process in art is found in the realm of social-psychological research. In this arena research has found that key roles are played by selective exposure, selective attention, and selective retention. First, in the choice of art materials, people have a tendency to choose works that express ideas congruent with those that the individual already holds. Then, people tend to pay more attention to, and remember better, aspects of the work that are congruent with their current values, attitudes, and beliefs (Gans, 1966; Becker, 1969). A social control effect may occur because of selective exposure, attention, and retention (Becker, 1969).

Support for social control theory is found in numerous studies involving analysis of various popular and folk traditions, for example, in the analysis of folk songs in China (Wang, 1934), the "Big Sister" radio serial drama (Warner & Henry, 1948), and the role of myth among Trobriand Islanders (Malinowski, 1948). Further support is found in a study by Inglis (1938), who concluded that in magazine short stories there was clear support for preserving the status quo, and in a study by Janowitz (1968), who found that the majority of mass media content does not challenge the existing social structure, so that a strong potential for social control effects exists.

The warning issued about social control theory is that society is too complex for art to have effects on its entirety (Albrecht, 1954)--

> social control through literature may either be limited to those norms and values common to all groups or applied to class or group control, each class or group corresponding to the art and literature that confirms its own set of values, customs, and beliefs. (p.112)

Social control theory does seem closely related to reflection theory (Albrecht, 1954). Certain social conditions are reflected in art, which then affirms those conditions.

Rather than citing the conservative nature of art, social change or influence theory cites its transformative powers. Because art is relatively autonomous and thus is not completely controlled by the ruling class, there is the potential for it to play a role in social change. Personnel and critics of the art field think that they are powerful social change agents, having long-term effects (Janowitz, 1968). It has been proposed that along with primary groups such as the family, public institutions, including art, are the other means of value transmission (Bear, 1967), values forming one of the bases for subsequent behaviours and actions.

The role of cultural forms as potentially transformative has been studied by several researchers (Wolff, 1981). Adorno studied the revolutionary potential of music, mass media, and literature. Benjamin studied film, poetry, drama, and photolithography. Prior to 1930, several researchers in the Soviet Union studied the transformative possibilities of literature, painting, film, and popular culture extensively. Ironically, the potentially subversive nature of this research in the Soviet Union led to the imposition of restrictive forms of censorship in subsequent years. More recently, in Great Britain, there has been research done on

the influencing potential of the various media, primarily by members of the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies (Wolff, 1981; Easton, Howkins, Laing, Merricks & Walker, 1988).

The importance of censorship in many societies reinforces the view that art may be a catalyst for change. That is, art may be a subversive element that may work against the prevailing ideology and power structures.

The results of some research supports the social change perspective. A summary of experimental studies concludes that "under contrived conditions even brief messages can produce measurable changes in attitudes among selected groups" (Janowitz, 1968, p.11). However, Gans (1966) has found that there may be an immediate impact, but that in all likelihood it gradually disappears. The majority of research into influence theory finds limited support. Much of the evidence suggests an absence of social change effects, partly due to the processes of selective exposure, attention, and retention (Gans, 1966). In fact, a series of studies done in the 1930s by the Payne fund, initiated in order to provide support for influence theory, found that effects were far from direct, and were highly dependent on an individual's background and needs (Albrecht, 1954). A large proportion of social scientists think that the role of mass media as agents of social change is limited because of the numerous other agents of change in society, such as technological progress and socialization (Janowitz, 1968).

Discussing the effects that art has on social change involves

two things: (a) features of the work of art itself, as well as the artist (his/her values, background, etc.); and (b) the audience and psychology (i.e. the possibilities of mind-shaping by external forces) (Bear, 1967). Research into the latter area has found several conditions under which limited effects may occur. Some examples of these findings are: (a) effects may be greater with ideas that are less important to audience members (Gans, 1966; Janowitz, 1968; Becker, 1969); (b) effects may be greater with younger people, particularly children (Gans, 1966; Becker, 1969; Wellek & Warren, 1949); (c) effects may be greater on people who are socially marginal, having weak group attachments (Janowitz, 1968; Gans, 1966); (d) effects may be greater with new ideas or issues on which people's attitudes are unstructured (Becker, 1969); (e) effects may be greater after cumulative consumption (Janowitz, 1968); (f) long-range effects are more likely than short-range effects (due to cumulative consumption) (Bauer & Bauer, 1960); and (g) messages from interpersonal contacts or other cultural elements may either enhance or negate messages receive from art (Janowitz, 1968; Becker, 1969).

Any effects that art may have on social change are difficult to assess because of several limitations of these studies. First, studies have measured only conscious effects (Gans, 1966). Second, change occurs gradually, so long-term effects may only be detected by social historians (Becker, 1969; Gans, 1966). Third, the complexity of the problem and of society as a whole make testing extremely precarious; art is only a single "thread" in a "web" of culture (Albrecht, 1954; Becker, 1969).

In conclusion, Albrecht (1954) argues that the social change that occurs which some social scientists say is due to the influence of literature (or other art forms) is more likely the result of overall cultural diffusion. Even if literature does contribute to social change, such changes are clearly not solely due to the literature.

The evaluations of the theories of reflection, relative autonomy, social control, and social change enable some conclusions to be drawn. Some aspects of a society or of groups within a society may be reflected in art, but reflection theory as a whole may be rejected because of its unidirectional and overly-simplistic approach. The theory of relative autonomy, as proposed by Althusser, may also be rejected because of its ultimate reversion to an economic reflection perspective. The concept of relative autonomy, however, provides an escape from reflection theory by postulating that art has some independence from the social world; this concept is therefore an important component of the theories of social control and social change.

Support is the clearest and most extensive for social control theory, so in the analysis of any particular art form or any particular works of art, the roles they play in maintaining the status quo should be examined. The most that can be said for influence or social change theory is that art may have some effects with some people under some conditions, including the effect of preserving the status quo in some context or other.

> The relationship between literature and art, and the total social structure is determined, as we have seen, by the role which they play in forming ideology. The imposition of values and norms of the ideology of the directing class is one way by which it exercises social control. The literature which dominates a society will reflect those values; but to the extent that some of it does not because of its relative autonomy, literature can be crucial in giving people the consciousness necessary for the formation of social movements. (Cappon, 1978, p.46)

Based on the evidence, a literary analysis should give social control theory a central position, but with additional consideration for influence theory. It may be difficult to prove that literature does have some influence on change, but it is also difficult to prove that it definitely has no effects on change. Influence theory must always be kept in mind; we may not be able to talk about direct and certain effects, but we can talk about potential effects.

All of these theories were originally postulated in reference to the broad concept of "art". Subsequently, as has been shown, they began to be applied to more specific art forms, such as "literature". The contemporary world of academia has also recently begun to apply these theories to a relatively new field of study, that of "popular culture".

Popular Culture

Definitions of Popular Culture

There are several different definitions of popular culture. The traditional definition of popular culture is that which stands in contrast to high culture (Williams, 1971), usually with the assumption that high culture is "real" art. Thus, classical music would be considered high culture, while rock music would be

considered popular culture; literary classics would be considered high culture, while many modern novels would be considered popular culture.

A second definition, related to the first, places popular culture in relation to the "masses" of the population; whatever cultural forms are popular with the masses at any given time comprise popular culture (Meyersohn, 1969; Williams, 1971). High culture is supposedly consumed primarily by the wealthy, educated few. The poorer, uneducated many consume popular culture.

A problem exists, however, in using the term popular culture in its relation and opposition to high culture (Roman & Christian-Smith, 1988). The central issue is the difficulty in obtaining consensus regarding how to distinguish between the two. Cultural forms considered to be classics and cultural forms popular with the masses are not historically constant. Today's literary classics were often considered popular novels when first written. Jazz, considered part of high culture in the late 20th century, was considered part of popular culture in the 1930s. Popular culture is not a stable, fixed set of objects, but rather changes historically with reference to the culture as a whole and the "state of play" in cultural relations (Easton et al., 1988).

A common definition in the late 20th century suggests that popular culture consists of cultural or artistic products that are commodities, manufactured for the marketplace, geared toward mass consumption, with profit-making a central concern (MacDonald, 1953; Hall et al., 1980). This definition is adequate for

representational cultural forms, such as art, music, literature, television, and film, but does not encompass lived cultural forms and the social relations existing in particular groups, for example, punk rockers (Roman & Christian-Smith, 1988).

Raymond Williams (1971) provides the broadest definition, the one that will be accepted in this research. Williams uses popular culture to refer to the everyday world. Experiences and cultural products that are a part of daily life for a population or for a particular group within that population comprise popular culture. The role of cultural analysis is to interpret the meanings of these cultural forms (Meyersohn, 1969).

History of Popular Cultural Production and Cultural Studies

Popular culture as everyday life has been in existence since the beginning of civilization. However, the items that comprise the commodities of popular culture have a much more limited history.

The production of these items began to grow during the 1880s, primarily due to increased education and more widespread literacy (Easton et al., 1988; MacDonald, 1953). Business found a market in cultural products for the "newly awakened masses" (MacDonald, 1953, p.168), and advancing technology enabled the production of greater numbers of various products at lower costs (MacDonald, 1953; Easton et al., 1988).

Products of popular culture were made easier to understand for most people than were the high art forms. Ease of consumption combined with ease of production led to rapid growth (MacDonald, 1953).

Contemporary cultural studies, as a discrete enterprise, began in the 1950s, after the introduction of television spurned public concern over its potential effects. Prior to contemporary cultural studies in the 1950s, most members of the world of academia tended to reject the study of popular culture, primarily because it was perceived as mere entertainment, undeserving of serious study. The growth of the field of cultural studies often caused conflict with other fields, especially literary critics, who claimed that their territorial rights were being usurped by cultural studies. In the 1960s, however, as part of the whole countercultural movement, alternative fields, including the field of cultural studies, were given room in universities (Easton et al., 1988).

The field of cultural studies initially focused on the analysis of popular culture. In the 1950s and 1960s, the primary concern was with the literature-and-society relationship (Easton et al., 1988; Albrecht, 1954). As the countercultural movement lost some momentum, criticism of many areas of study in popular culture once again grew, so that in the 1970s the focus of cultural studies became more "serious" forms of the mass media involved in news and current affairs. In the early 1980s, however, concern once again became all aspects of popular culture and how people spent their leisure time. The reversion back to popular culture as a whole occurred for two reasons. First, radical social historians, in the late 1970s, increasingly began to study popular culture in past eras, showing that it was not such a trivial area of study after all. Second, there were feminist concerns which suggested that

focusing only upon serious cultural forms and ignoring popular cultural forms was "precisely to reproduce uncritically those structures of domination and subordination which consign[ed] women's cultural activity to the realms of the insignificant" (Easton et al., 1988, p.16). So not only was popular culture found not to be a trivial area of study, but now there were those who argued it was an important area of study.

Cultural studies have their beginnings in the study of art in society; the main difference is that cultural studies have a more specific focus. Because the study of popular culture is a modern focused version of the study of art, the same theories have been applied to the popular culture-society relationship as to the art-society relationship. The opinion among social scientists that a bidirectional relationship exists between popular culture and society is widely held (Albrecht, 1954; Meyersohn, 1969; Janowitz, 1968; Easton et al., 1988; Witte, 1941). Popular culture may reflect some social conditions, influence social change, or exercise social control (Janowitz, 1968).

Traditionally in the study of popular culture, however, the focus has been on the theory that popular culture influences social change. This has its origins in the High-Low Debate, initiated primarily by mainstream literary critics (Bear, 1967). One side of the argument maintains that popular culture should not be studied in itself because it does not transmit the "proper" values; it should only be studied in order to justify its repression (Easton et al., 1988). This position is based on the assumption that low

art, or popular culture, has negative effects on its audiences, while high art has positive effects (Bear, 1967; Gans, 1966). Thus, consumption of high art should be encouraged while, simultaneously, people must be protected from popular culture or the public arts (Hazard, 1958). Defenders of this position fear Gresham's Law in Culture--popular culture (bad art) will eventually drive out high culture (good art) because of popular culture's ease of consumption (MacDonald, 1953).

The proposed negative effects that popular culture has on audiences can be placed into four categories (Gans, 1966). First, popular culture is emotionally destructive because it provides spurious gratification; audiences begin to have their needs gratified through the consumption of popular culture rather than in reality. Second, it is frequently brutalizing to audiences because of the excessive violence it often portrays. Third, it is intellectually destructive because it is escapist, leading to the inability to deal with reality. Fourth, it is culturally destructive because after long-term consumption audience members will be unable or unwilling to attend to or consume high culture.

The High-Low Debate has stimulated a large proportion of popular culture research that continues today--research into specific cultural forms further outlining negative effects on audiences, and in response, research into specific cultural forms attempting to defend them against such accusations. Some examples of current debates that are of feminist concern include those over pornography and the female characters in rock music videos, and

their consequences for perceptions of and violence against women. These debates reaffirm the significance of examining, sociologically, popular cultural forms. In this context, women's romantic novels are important items of cultural meaning requiring analysis and understanding. In the next chapter there will be a review of gender studies, and of gender studies in popular culture, particularly in the area of romance novels.

CHAPTER 2

GENDER, POPULAR CULTURE, AND ROMANCE

The issue of gender took on significance in the early 1970s as a result of a resurgence of the feminist movement (Wolff, 1981; Mackie 1986a). The recognition of the importance of gender and gender differences in society has become more pronounced in sociological works since that time.

Bem (1981) suggested that "the male-female distinction serves as a basic organizing principle for every human society" (p.355). For example, in North America, men and women are assigned different roles, resulting in several consequences. First, males and females have different educational experiences. On the assumption that they will fulfill their differentially assigned roles, they are often segregated into different courses; males are encouraged to take math and science courses, while females are steered toward language, English, and social science courses (Special Senate Committee on Youth, 1986; Tunittin, Anisef & MacKinnon, 1983; Baker, 1985; Tittle, 1981; Nicholson, 1975).

The consequences of different educational experiences are that men and women will generally have different job opportunities, which tend to produce occupational segregation. For example, clerical and service sectors are predominantly female (Nicholson, 1975; Tittle, 1981; Armstrong & Armstrong, 1984a; Baker, 1985; Special Senate Committee on Youth, 1986).

More generally, however, the consequence of differential role assignment is different economic experiences. Women earn less,

work part-time more, and are in and out of the labour force more than men. These occupational characteristics are related to women's normatively expected roles of wife and mother (Baker, 1985). The corresponding role of the husband as primary wage earner creates differential power in the marital relationship (Mackie, 1986a). The characteristics of female-oriented occupations lead to what has been labelled the pink-collar ghetto, and female poverty, particularly for elderly women. In general, women experience double careers. They may now work outside the home, but they also must assume primary responsibility for the care of the home and children (Coser & Rokoff, 1971; Nicholson, 1975; Clark & Harvey, 1976; Hochschild, 1989).

The different roles assigned to males and females express the importance that is placed on gender as a characteristic in society. At birth, the first label a child receives is boy or girl; it is the first piece of information doctors often give, and the first question that parents usually ask (Brooks-Gunn & Matthews, 1979; Lott, 1981; Mackie, 1986a). Parents of newborns often perceive sex-typed behaviour in their infants even when objective measures reveal no behavioural differences. (Lott, 1981; Brooks-Gunn & Matthews, 1979; Rubin, Provenzano & Luria, 1974). The importance of gender in society is also apparent in the reasons parents give for wanting a child of a certain sex (Hoffman, cited in Lott, 1981), and in parental goals and expectations for their children (Peterson, Rollins, Thomas & Heaps, 1982; Hoffman, cited in Lott, 1981).

Gender is something that an individual learns, in the form of a gender role, in the same way that all other roles comprising an individual and his/her identity are learned. The process is called socialization, and the specific process through which gender roles are learned is called gender socialization.

Gender Socialization

A gender role may be broadly defined as "a constellation of qualities an individual understands to characterize males and females in his (or her) culture" (Block, cited in Brooks-Gunn & Matthews, 1979, p.3). Gender roles are based on the culture's understanding of what is normatively male and female, and these norms are the bases for socialization practices. Joan Scott's conception of gender (1986) elaborates upon the more precise cultural components of gender, and this is the definition that will be used in this research. Scott suggests:

> Four interrelated elements constitute gender as both a material and discursive practice: (1) culturally available symbols that invoke multiple and often contradictory representations; (2) normative concepts that set forth interpretations of the meanings of these symbols and which typically take the form of binary oppositions between universals for masculinity and femininity; (3) kinship systems, which in advanced societies include their typical organization through the sex-segregated labor markets, education, the polity and other social institutions; (4) subjective identities as they are constructed psychoanalytically at the level of individual biographies and collective social formations, which need to be seen historically and in relation to the social organization of gender relationships. (Roman & Christian-Smith, 1988, p.6)

The area of gender socialization, however is difficult to study because of its complexity; direct effects of any single socializing agent on the child's developing gender role have been difficult to find (Lott, 1981).

Significant socializing agents include parents and schools, as well as forms of popular culture. Parents, or the significant nurturers, are the first socializing agents the child encounters. The behaviour of the primary nurturers affects the child's developing gender role through differential treatment of males and females or sons and daughters (Lott, 1981; Brooks-Gunn & Matthews, 1979), and by providing gender role models to children simply by being themselves (Sebald, 1984; Brooks-Gunn & Matthews, 1979).

Some examples of the consequences of early childhood gender role socialization are as follows: (a) self-esteem and self-confidence--girls have lower expectancies for success and see themselves as having fewer skills than boys (Lott, 1981; Brooks-Gunn & Matthews, 1979); (b) the tendency to stereotype males and females (Lott, 1981) and believe that girls are "supposed" to do certain things while boys are "supposed" to do others (Brooks-Gunn & Matthews, 1979); this includes sex-typing occupations (Mackie, 1986a; Brooks-Gunn & Matthews, 1979; Nemerowicz, 1979); and (c) the internalization of sex-stereotyped goals and expectations (Baker, 1985; Matteson, 1975; Greenberger, cited in Tittle, 1981; Frost & Diamond, cited in Tittle, 1981; Prediger, Roth & Nolth, cited in Tittle, 1981).

Once children enter the school system, what has been labelled the <u>hidden curriculum</u> begins to influence gender socialization (Lott, 1981; Brooks-Gunn & Matthews, 1979; Baker, 1985; Christian-Smith, 1987). The school system's official curriculum treats male and female students alike, but through the hidden

curriculum, students learn that males and females are separate and different entities, having different roles to play in society. The hidden curriculum includes readers and textbooks containing gender role stereotypes, as well as the behaviour and attitudes of the teachers themselves. For example, teachers react to the same behaviours in male and female students differently (Lott, 1981; Brooks-Gunn & Matthews, 1979), and provide male students with more personal academic attention than female students (Baker, 1985; Lott, 1981).

Although the relative influence of parents and schools on gender socialization fluctuates according to the child's age (Brooks-Gunn & Matthews, 1979), popular culture or the mass media is a constant presence throughout the life span. Thus, the role that it plays in the formation of gender roles must be examined.

Gender and Popular Culture

Popular culture or the mass media is thought to play an important role in gender socialization (Lueptow, 1984) and "bear significantly on personality development" (Sebald, 1984, p.184). Two decades ago the Royal Commission on the Status of Women criticized the media for its

> "degrading, moronic" depiction of women in advertisements and argued that, although men as well as women are stereotyped, "the results may be more damaging for women since advertising encourages feminine dependency by urging women not to act but to live out their aspirations in the imagination and in dreams". (cited in Mackie, 1986a, p.116)

These characteristics of the media seem to have only changed minimally in the ensuing years.

Gender first became a concern in popular culture studies in

the mid/late 1960s, beginning with a concern over the gender role stereotypes in consumer advertising. After 1968 there began a more overall concern with gender divisions in popular culture, including television programs and books, and with gender divisions in the social world as a whole. The late 1960s signaled a resurgence of the feminist movement, and focused attention on the lives of women in patriarchal society (Easton et al., 1988).

Research about popular culture and gender has tended to focus on men rather than women, particularly adolescent men. In the study of the youth subculture, male youths have often been the ones to be studied. When women have been included in popular culture studies, they have been analyzed in reference to the male participants, within a male-oriented framework. The result has been that women have been presented stereotypically. The everyday lives of women and the cultural products they consume did not become a predominant concern until the early 1980s, when there was an increasing influence of the feminist perspective in general (Easton et al., 1988). Since then, feminist work has become just as central to cultural studies as Marxism.

The first feminist studies of popular culture were essentially descriptive lists of the images of women found in popular cultural forms (Fishburn, 1982). These popular cultural forms included magazines, film, television, advertising, sports, and comics (Fishburn, 1982). The purpose these studies served is that they identified America's mythology and showed how popular cultural images of women created support for the dominant ideologies

regarding femininity (Roman & Christian-Smith, 1988; Fishburn, 1982). These studies revealed that even in the 1960s and 1970s, at the onset of the second feminist movement, popular culture still overwhelmingly expressed traditional images of women (Fishburn, 1982; Peirce, 1990).

Perhaps the area within studies of popular culture that has had the most research with regard to gender issues is television, because television was what initially stimulated contemporary cultural studies, and because television is the most widespread form of mass media in our society at the present time.

Television

Maccoby and Jacklin use the term self-socialization to describe what occurs when children watch television; for example, they pay special attention to individuals with whom they share gender (cited in Brooks-Gunn & Matthews, 1979). As a result, the roles they see portrayed may have a substantial impact.

Gender role stereotypes have been found to be prevalent in children's programming, adult programming, and commercials (Lott, 1981). Butler and Paisley (1980) describe the images of women, compared to men, found in commercials: (a) almost all commercials with voice-overs are spoken and sung by men (i.e. by a ratio of approximately 9:1); (b) commercials show men in more roles than women and more often show women in family roles; (c) women are shown doing activities in the home and portray men as the beneficiaries of these activities; (d) the settings of commercials show more women inside the home and more men outside the home; (e)

women in commercials are shown as younger then men; and (f) in commercials during children's programming, women and girls are seen less often than men and boys.

In television programs, male characters outnumber female characters 2:1, and the characters portrayed usually exhibit sex-stereotyped traits (Brooks-Gunn & Matthews, 1979; Butler & Paisley, 1980). For example, men are more often employed than women and have higher status jobs, marital status is more often known for women than for men, and while men are shown in more roles than women, women are more often shown in family roles (Butler & Paisley, 1980).

That television may have a strong influence on the gender role attitudes of children and adolescents is evident in a number of studies. Frueh and McGhee (cited in Brooks-Gunn & Matthews, 1979) have found a correlation between long hours of television watching and strong sex typing. In another study, it was found that heavy television watchers (i.e. more than four hours per day), when asked factual questions about the real world, gave responses based on their often-biased television experiences, while light television watchers (i.e. less than two hours per day) gave answers based on reality (Gross, 1974). Butler and Paisley (1980) found that girls exhibit greater effort in tasks after viewing a plot with an achieving heroine. They also found that girls are more likely to argue that women could be in nontraditional careers after seeing a show in which women are portrayed in nontraditional careers.

Stereotyped gender images, like those found on television,

have also been consistently found in other popular cultural forms --radio, magazines, and even comics. In some popular cultural forms, notably novels and magazines, it has been suggested, in fact, that the trend has been toward increasing sexism (Brooks-Gunn & Matthews, 1979; Christian-Smith, 1987, 1988, 1990). Lott (1981) found that narrow, stereotyped images of women continue to be prevalent in novels. One analysis of adolescent novels found that the heroines are primarily concerned with clothes, dates, diets, and boys (Nelson, 1975). Peirce (1990), in a comparison of issues of Seventeen magazine from 1961, 1972, and 1985, found that although 1972 issues did reflect the feminist movement to some extent, 1985 issues regained a close similarity to the 1961, pre-feminist issues.

The images of women found in the various forms of popular culture may have profound effects.

> Images formed from mediated percepts become part of a woman's conception of herself. Mediated percepts of the status and abilities of other women...effect her image of her own status and abilities....Plans are formed partly from images of the roles that other women play. Never seeing women in some roles and seeing women play other roles poorly reduces the likelihood that a woman will attempt such roles herself. (Butler & Paisley, 1980, pp.49-50)

It is only in recent years that there has been an increasing focus on popular cultural forms targeted specifically at women--soap operas, talk shows, women's magazines, and books and movies targeted at women (Finn, 1988). Research has been done to determine the roles these cultural forms play in the creation of our culture's ideology of what constitutes femininity.

Romance novels, particularly series romance novels, have been

repeatedly criticized for their sexist, stereotyped portrayals of women (Modleski, 1982; Radway, 1984; Jensen, 1984; Thurston, 1987; Miles, 1988; Hynes, 1990). Series romance novels are one of the most important genres of contemporary popular novels to analyze because of a characteristic they share with television--mass consumption. A series romance novel, also known as a category or categorical romance, is identified by the particular line to which it belongs (e.g. Harlequin Presents, Silhouette Desire). Each line releases several new novels each month, with each book in a line recognizable by its cover art. As popular culture products that are targeted at women, they represent an important subject for sociological research into popular culture and gender.

Romance Novels as Cultural Studies

Series romance novels are the focus of this research. They are an important area of study because within popular culture they are almost exclusively an area of women's leisure. They are books for women, about women, written primarily by women. These books focus on an area connected with the ideology of romance, a central component of women's lives in our culture (Easton et al., 1988).

The study of series romance novels fits into what has been perceived as the framework for popular culture analysis, captured in a phrase by Harold Lasswell--"who says what to whom and with what effects?" (Janowitz, 1968). The who refers to the producers of series romances and the entire production process. The says what refers to the content of the novels, and involves some elements of reflection. The to whom refers to the audiences--who

is reading series romances and why, and what is their perspective on the process and content? Finally, the with what effects brings into play the two theories of the nature of the art-society relationship that are focused on in an historical materialist analysis, social control theory and influence or social change theory. Do series romances serve to maintain the status quo in terms of gender relations or do they contribute to changes in gender relations? It has already been explained that popular culture plays a part in gender role socialization, so what types of gender roles are romance novels socializing women into accepting?

The Object

There are series romance lines targeted at both adults and adolescents; those targeted at adults will be referred to as adult series romances, while those targeted at adolescents will be referred to as adolescent or teen series romances. Series romances must be differentiated from what will be called single-title romances, which are not associated with any particular line; they are released independently, like most popular novels. Single-title romances include those by the familiar authors Judith Krantz, Bertrice Small, and Rebecca Brandewyne. These novels may feature contemporary or historical plots.

Adolescent/teen series romances must also be distinguished from adolescent soap-opera series romances, which like series romances, are associated with a particular line, each line releasing a number of books each month. Soap-opera series romances, however, feature the same general set of characters and

the same setting in every book. As with soap-operas on television, soap-opera series romances may have story lines continue throughout several books.

Series romance novels, at both the adult and adolescent levels, are specifically produced for and geared toward mass consumption (Radway, 1984; Jensen, 1984; Christian-Smith, 1987, 1988, 1990). Research about adult series romances has found that the average reader consumes between 12 and 16 books per month. Radway (1984) has found that 55% of adult series romance readers consume 1-4 romances weekly, while another 33% read 5-9 romances weekly. Almost 90% of romance readers read daily. Harper's Index in December 1989 reported that in 1989, in the United States alone, 7191 Harlequin novels were bought per hour, and Harlequin is only one publisher of adult series romances (Hynes, 1990). In Canada, more than two-thirds of 11th grade girls list reading as one of their three favourite leisure activities, and they most often read teen magazines and romance novels (Baker, 1985).

"With What Effects" -- Gender Socialization in Series Romances

Because romance novels are one of the main choices of reading material for adolescent girls, they warrant analysis in terms of gender role socialization. Gender role development, as a part of the development of a personal identity, is at its most intense during adolescence (Sebald, 1984). This is a crucial time because whereas as children their hopes and dreams are usually mere abstractions, in adolescence hopes and dreams are being transformed into plans of action (Brooks-Gunn & Matthews, 1979). Role models,

including those in mass-consumed series romance novels, are most important and have their most direct impact during this time (Brooks-Gunn & Matthews, 1979).

Series romances are likely to most affect the gender role aspect of the personal identity because of their content; romance novels are "important sources of information about interpersonal relationships, love, sex, and women's value and functions in relation to men's" (Lott, 1981, p.78). The socializing effect is even more pronounced in adolescent girls than in adult women because adolescents may have little first-hand experience in cross-sex interpersonal relationships. The mass media is often their first exposure to the world of romance.

For adolescent girls, then, romance novels serve the function of anticipatory socialization. Anticipatory socialization is "that which occurs in advance of the actual playing of roles. This rehearsal for the future involves learning something about role requirements, both behaviours and attitudes, and visualizing oneself in the role" (Mackie, 1986b, p.66).

This visualization process is prominent in romance novel reading; the reader of romances puts herself in the place of the heroine, vicariously living out the heroine's experiences (Modleski, 1982; Jensen, 1984; Radway, 1984; Thurston, 1987). During the reading process, the reader becomes the heroine, and throughout the course of the story learns the "appropriate" actions, values, and attitudes associated with relationships with males in general, and with romantic relationships in particular.

The normative expectation of marriage and children (Bernard, cited in Tittle, 1981) is generally reinforced through portrayal in all forms of mass media. This normative pressure can affect values and attitudes, thereby affecting a woman's future life course. Tittle (1981) suggests that career decisions are often a function of expectations of marriage and children. Romance novels in particular have been criticized for reinforcing a traditional dichotomy between the sexes and emphasizing the wife/mother role as the primary goal for women (Modleski, 1982; Jensen, 1984; Radway, 1984; Thurston, 1987).

Series romance novels aimed at adolescents have an even more powerful socializing effect because they are targeted at the 12-14 year-old (Jensen, 1984), an age at which most girls, during the course of the last several decades, have had little romantic experience. At this age, socializing agents are important in defining what values and attitudes one should have, how one should look, and what one should want. They are especially important in the absence of actual experiences or access to such experiences that are normatively prescribed, such as love and romance. While this is a crucial time for thinking about and planning romance, it is also a crucial time for thinking about and planning education. It is at this age that adolescents begin to choose electives in school, and begin planning the educational course they will follow. Holland (1990) has found an inverse relationship among young women between a commitment to romance and a commitment to education. Thus, not only does learning about romance affect girls romantic

lives, it also can affect their educational and subsequently their occupational lives.

Series Romance History

Adult Series Romance Novels

In 1972, Harlequin first introduced what is now known as the series or category romance novel (Thurston, 1987; Radway, 1984; Jensen, 1984). Within a few years, what began as a single romance line became several different lines, and shortly thereafter, other publishing houses entered the series romance business. Currently, there are well over a dozen adult series romance lines on the market, with new lines being introduced each year.

In the late 1970s, every Harlequin released became a bestseller, at a time when 98% of all books published each year were not bestsellers (Modleski, 1982). By 1982, Harlequins alone constituted 10-12% of the American paperback market, and 28% of the Canadian paperback market (Jensen, 1985; Radway, 1984), not including the other publishers' series romance lines. In 1989, series romances constituted 60% of American mass-market book sales (Hynes, 1990).

As of 1981, paperback houses had 8-40% of their annual title output as romances, and those with less than 15% were looking for ways of expanding that genre (Maryles & Dahlin, 1981). By 1985, 80 new titles were being released in series romance lines every month, and by the late 1980s, that number rose to 120 new titles each month (Hynes, 1990).

In 1985, series romances had 500 million dollars in annual

sales (Thurston, 1987). Harlequin alone sells 4 million books per month retail, not including those sold to subscribers (Harlequin Enterprises Limited, 1989); their books are printed in 20 languages and sold in more than 100 countries (Margolis, 1991). In 1984, 25% of American women admitted to reading paperback romances; the actual proportion is likely higher because of the stigma attached to reading romances, which motivates women to deny reading them (Thurston, 1987). An even larger romance boom has occurred since 1985, with more books being sold, larger numbers of women buying them, and more new lines being created (Thurston, 1987; Hynes, 1990).

Adolescent Series Romance Novels

Due to the resounding popularity of adult series romances, publishing houses turned to the young adult population as a further market for series romances. Teenage girls were already reading adult romances (Miles, 1988; Thurston, 1987; Rivera, 1990; Baker, 1985), so that series romance lines developed to target adolescent girls were a natural marketing ploy.

Scholastic was the first publisher to enter the market. Through market research, Scholastic discovered that books with romantic themes were the most frequently ordered in its Teenage Bookclub (Smith, 1981). It was decided that the next move would be to expand into bookstores with a new teen series romance line. "Wildfire" was introduced in January, 1980 (Christian-Smith, 1987, 1988, 1990; Smith, 1981; Fallon, 1984; Lanes, 1981; Harvey, 1981a). Within the first two years, "Wildfire" had sold 2.25 million books.

The popularity of "Wildfire" was apparent immediately, and soon resulted in the introduction of four more lines in 1981--Dell's "Young Love", Scholastic's "Wishing Star", Bantam's "Sweet Dreams", and Silhouette's "First Love"--(Smith, 1981; Barson, 1981; Fallon, 1984; Harvey, 1981b; Watson, 1981; Wigutoff, 1981a).

The first ten titles of "Wishing Star" sold 250 000 copies. The first six titles of "Sweet Dreams", which were released simultaneously, were all in the top 15 of B. Dalton's Juvenile Bestsellers list in August, 1981, including the top three positions (Barson, 1981). In a one month period, "Sweet Dreams" shipped over one million copies (Smith, 1981). The average print run of a teen novel in 1981 was 7500 copies, but the average print run for a teen series romance was 200 000 copies (Lanes, 1981). For the first time in young adult publishing history, the young adult market was making a profit. Prior to the introduction of adolescent series romances, young adult publishing was not a profit-making business (Smith, 1981).

The popularity of adolescent series romances continued. In 1982, two more lines were introduced, including a third line for Scholastic, called "Windswept" (Smith, 1981). As of 1984, teen series romances made up half of the young adult market, releasing approximately 100 titles per year (Thurston, 1987). Christian-Smith (1987) reports that in 1984, teen series romance novels were in the top three kinds of books read and purchased by girls. By the mid-1980s, there were 12 teen series romance lines available.

The existing research on adolescent series romance novels, although limited, will now be examined. The related research on adult series romances will also be discussed.

Background Literature

The study of romance novels as a whole and series romances in particular is a recent phenomenon. As a result, research done in the area is limited. A fundamental differentiation must be made among the publications that do exist. This differentiation is between actual scientific studies of romance novels and more simple commentaries on romance novels. Most of what has been written about romances falls into the latter category, and includes articles by writers, journalists, business people, and child educators.

First, research done on adult romances will be summarized. Research done on adolescent romance novels will follow.

Adult Romance Novels

Although there are numerous commentaries about adult romance novels in magazines, newspapers, and academic journals, there are only a handful of what may be considered studies of these books. The content of each of these individual studies can be examined within a general framework of the areas covered by romance novel research: (a) plot formula; (b) the heroine; (c) the hero; (d) romance novel readers; (e) reasons for reading romances--reader responses; and (f) reasons for reading romances--researcher responses and conclusions.

Plot Formula. The basic plot of the romance novel has been summarized by Geraldine Finn (1988):

> In spite of the heroine's wilful [sic] and determined resistance to this hateful and domineering stranger who she did not invite into her life, she finds herself in mid-story quivering with excitement at the very idea of him or the thought of his presence. The fear and humiliation his scornful and taunting behavior caused in her at first is subtly transformed into the thrill of love, or more recently, sexual desire; a crudely physical condition of extreme agitation which reduces her, without the intervention of her will, to a puppet of his will....He, meanwhile, begins by being cool, condescending, bemused and even sometimes cruel and hostile towards the heroine and is transformed into a gentle, loving and nurturing mother/father figure about six pages from the end of the story. (p.61)

This summary adequately expresses the plot analyses contained within most of the other research (Modleski, 1982; Radway, 1984; Jensen, 1984).

Most of the obstacles encountered in the relationship are the result of a lack of communication (Jensen, 1984). A relatively recent plot device regarding the obstacle is the heroine refusing to become close to the hero because of her fear that she will lose her independence to him (Jensen, 1984; Thurston, 1987).

Because of the intense market research that is conducted by romance publishing houses, the plot ingredients readers say they want or do not want adequately reflect actual book content. Radway (1984), in a survey of 42 romance readers and personal interviews with 16 romance readers, discovered the five things readers of the time never wanted to see in a romance--bed-hopping, a sad ending, rape, physical torture, and a weak hero. According to her respondents, the most important ingredient in a romance is a happy ending.

Another study (Thurston, 1987) utilized the survey responses of 600 romance readers (300 who regularly read single-title

historical romances and 300 who regularly read series romances) in both 1982 and 1985. In 1982, the five most liked story attributes were as follows: (a) detailed sexual description; (b) a well developed hero point-of-view; (c) strong, independent heroine; (d) many love scenes; and (e) a sensitive, compromising hero. The responses in 1985 differed slightly: (a) a mixed point-of-view; (b) several love scenes; (c) mature humor and teasing; (d) detailed sexual description; and (e) a fairly complicated plot. The sexual component mentioned by the readers is evident in the plot; in 90% of the 100 romance novels analyzed by Thurston (1987) in 1982 and 1985, the hero and heroine had sex before marriage.

The Heroine. Ruggiero and Weston (1977) did one of the first analyses of the romance heroine. They did a content analysis of the gender-role characterization of women in gothic romance novels (one of the precursors to the series romance novel), focusing on two dimensions of the characters, the sociological dimension and the psychological dimension. Within the sociological dimension they examined the heroine and the rival woman's attitude toward female roles, sexual behaviour, manipulation of others, and risk-taking. Within the psychological dimension they examined the characters' occupational choice, principal aspirations, and personality traits. On each level of the two dimensions the characters were given a "Gender-Role Characterization Index" of 1 for traditional, 2 for mixed, and 3 for nontraditional. They concluded that the heroine was overwhelmingly nontraditional, especially in comparison with the rival woman.

In Radway's analysis (1984), readers said they liked stories with " 'strong', 'fiery' heroines who are capable of 'defying the hero', softening him, and showing him the value of loving and caring for another" (p.54). According to these readers, important traits in a heroine are intelligence (chosen by 45% of respondents) and a sense of humor (chosen by 21% of respondents). Jensen's content analysis (1984) of 200 Harlequins found that the reader's desire for strong, fiery heroines was increasingly being reflected in the novels. Radway (1984) found, however, that the heroine's defiance is virtually always childlike and ineffective.

Jensen (1984) provides a good description of the romantic heroine.

> Perhaps the heroines as characters can be understood and summarized by a composite picture. The Harlequin heroine is an average woman. She is not a raving beauty but she has some good features that make her attractive. This attractiveness is reinforced by her personality because she is a nice person, kind and loving, responsible and trustworthy, although she is not perfect by any means. She has bouts of temper or irrationality but these failings can be forgiven because of her good intentions. She is working class or middle class with at least a high school education and increasingly some form of higher education. Her occupation may vary although it is usually based upon nurturing skills or artistic ability, both acceptable feminine accomplishments. She is relatively comfortable but "missing something" in her life, which the hero will supply. (p.89)

The heroine keeps working after marriage, but usually in the form of freelance work that can be done in the home or working with her husband. Jensen (1984) perceives the heroine as being filled with anger, an anger often mirrored in the lives of many women: (a) anger at being taken for granted; (b) anger at "the credibility that men have in the world by virtue of their gender" (p.105); (c)

anger at not being treated and respected as an adult; and (d) anger at their own dependence upon men for "social approval and protection" (p.126). The heroine's anger is expressed through her overall attitudes and behaviour, and particularly through her interactions with and reactions to the hero.

A more recent analysis of romantic heroines, those in "erotic" series romance novels, portrays a more positive, less stereotyped image of them (Thurston, 1987). Thurston's readers, who completed semantic differential scales on the personality traits of characters, perceived minimal sex-typing in the heroine; this perception is confirmed by Thurston's own analysis. She finds that the "new heroine" is older (often in her late twenties or early thirties), more confident, assertive, self-sufficient, and daring. She is overwhelmingly career-oriented (97% of heroines have careers, 31% are self-employed), is frequently in a nontraditional field, and keeps her career after marriage. Most heroines are sexually experienced (97%), and in 90% of instances they take the initiative and share control of sexual activity with the hero. Thurston suggests that as the 1980s have progressed, the heroine has become increasingly nontraditional, a reflection of the effect of the women's movement on women's desires and perceived ideals. She also remarks that even more dramatic changes in the heroine were occurring in post-1985 novels.

The Hero. Less time has been devoted to the study of the hero in romance novels than has been the case for the heroine. The typical hero is in his mid-to-late thirties, is older than the

heroine by several years, and is generally upper class (Jensen, 1984). He is tall, strong, rugged, self-confident, successful, and accomplished (Jensen, 1984). He is a leader and is well-respected (Radway, 1984). No matter what kind of career he has, he is always his own boss, and usually is the boss of others as well (Jensen, 1984). Both Jensen (1984) and Radway (1984) summarize the role of the hero in terms of the description of the traditional North American male role provided by David and Brannon (1976) in their book The Forty-Nine Percent Majority: The Male Sex Role. According to these researchers, the traditional North American male role can be summarized as follows: (a) No Sissy Stuff; (b) the Big Wheel; (c) the Sturdy Oak; and (d) Give 'em Hell. No Sissy Stuff is characterized by a stigma that is attached to any and all stereotypically feminine traits or activities. The Big Wheel refers to status, success, and being admired by others, especially men. The Sturdy Oak is associated with confidence, self-reliance, control, and toughness. Give 'em Hell is associated with taking risks, aggression, and violence, when necessary.

Thurston (1987) suggests that the "new hero" is more open, flexible, sensitive, and vulnerable. Other researchers stipulate that these features must be in addition to those of the traditional male role, not in place of; his sensitivity must be combined with masculinity (Jensen, 1984; Radway, 1984). Above all, the hero must always be stronger than the heroine (Jensen, 1984; Radway, 1984). Thus, as the heroine has become increasingly stronger, the hero has had to as well.

The 46 readers in Radway's survey (1984) list the most important traits in a hero as intelligence, tenderness, a sense of humor, strength, and protectiveness. Radway suggests that these are not so much character traits as they are things that heros should do. She concludes that romances are not fantasies about a particular mate, but about a particular way of being loved and cared for.

Who Reads Romances? The readers of romances novels, once characterized as middle-aged, working-class housewives, are now fairly representative of women in general, at least in terms of most demographic characteristics (Jensen, 1984; Radway, 1984; Thurston, 1987). A survey of 600 romance readers (Thurston, 1987) found that almost two-thirds are between the ages of 26 and 45, and 71% are married; two-thirds have children In 1985, one-third of the readers were full-time homemakers, one-third of whom were planning to work outside the home in the future. Almost 60% were employed outside the home, either full-time or part-time. More than one-third considered their work as careers, and half would rather work than stay home. Approximately half of the readers attended college or have a university degree; of those with a degree, 58% have a Bachelor's degree, 34% have a Master's degree, and 2% have a PhD. Over one-third work in pink-collar jobs, and more than one quarter have professional positions; only 6% have blue-collar jobs.

Romance readers may be considered "readers" in general. Reading is their primary leisure activity. They read all types of

books, both fiction and nonfiction (Jensen, 1984). In addition to romance novels, almost half read mainstream fiction, 40% read nonfiction, 39% read mysteries, and 20% read westerns, a traditionally male literary genre (Thurston, 1987). Romance readers watch very little television (Small, 1981; Jensen, 1984). One-third watch less than two hours a day, and less than one-third watch daytime or nighttime soap operas (Thurston, 1987).

When readers do differ from the general female population, it may be in the direction of being more egalitarian and less traditional. Approximately three fourths of romance readers are pro-choice on the abortion issue (Thurston, 1987). In fact, on various measures of reader attitudes they are overwhelmingly egalitarian, including the issues of male and female roles, occupations, salaries, politics, and the division of labour within the home (Thurston, 1987).

Jensen (1984) categorizes the types of romance readers. These categories are unrelated to age, race, marital status, or occupation. First is the keen reader, who may be considered addicted to series romance, reads them to the exclusion of all else, and experiences a blur between the fantasy of the novels and reality. Second is the critical reader, who "does not really approve of romances but...is drawn to them anyway" (p.145). Third is the casual reader, for whom reading romances is a leisure activity, and who readily separates fantasy from reality. The majority of readers fit into this category.

Radway (1984) also finds that most readers are casual readers

who recognize the differences between fantasy and reality. When asked whether the characters and events in romance novels were similar to those they knew or had experienced, more than half replied negatively. When asked whether the heroine's feelings were similar to their own however, more than half replied positively. Thus, the material distinction between fantasy and reality is quite clear. The emotional distinction, on the other hand, is somewhat blurry. This supports Radway's argument that these stories are not about particular people or events, but about a particular way of being loved and cared for.

Why Read Romances? Reader Responses. There is a great deal of similarity among the major studies in the reasons readers give for reading romance novels. Two-thirds of Jensen's sample of 30 readers gave "light reading" as a response. Series romances are easy to read because they are formula fiction. Thus, they can be read under less-than-ideal conditions--on the bus to and from work, or while the children are sleeping or playing outside.

> Women's working conditions in [and out of] the home, therefore, partially dictate what they are able to read because it is difficult to read a complex or "deep" novel in short twenty-minute to a half-hour snatches of time. (Jensen, 1984, p.147)

These books provide relaxation and escape, responses given by a majority of readers (Small, 1981; Radway, 1984; Thurston, 1987). Half of Thurston's 600 readers (1987) in her 1985 survey said that they use erotic novels as an escape from daily stressors. Three-quarters of Radway's participants (1984) said they reread favourite books, particularly during times of stress, because they know how the stories will make them feel. Virtually all readers

enjoy, and in fact demand, the happy, positive endings (Jensen, 1984). The key issue to these readers is that romance novels provide something that is different from ordinary existence.

Why Read Romances? Researcher Responses. A common explanation for why romance novels are so popular among women is that they provide vicarious problem-solving and need fulfillment (Finn, 1988; Miles, 1988; Modleski, 1982; Jensen, 1984; Radway, 1984). Romance novels address real contradictions and problems faced by women in a patriarchal society--how to "catch" a man while retaining some independence, how to deal with unexpressive or aggressive men, how to combine career and family--and then show the heroine resolving these conflicts (Finn, 1988; Modleski, 1982; Jensen, 1984). Some researchers argue, however, that the solutions provided in the stories are false and individualistic. The problems are solved in terms of ironing out misunderstandings in the individual relationship. As a result, female readers may not see any need for changes in social structures and gender relations--the problems are perceived as individual problems rather than the result of structural inequalities (Finn, 1988; Modleski, 1982; Radway, 1984).

> When a romance presents a story of a woman who is misunderstood by the hero, mistreated and manhandled as a consequence of his misreading, and then suddenly loved, protected, and cared for by him because he recognizes that he mistook the meaning of her behavior, the novel is informing its readers that the minor acts of violence they must contend with in their own lives can be similarly reinterpreted as the result of misunderstandings or of jealousy born of "true love". The readers are therefore assured that those acts do not warrant substantial changes or traumatic upheaval in a familiar way of life. (Radway, 1984, p.75)

Two needs are activated in women by living in a patriarchal culture, which are then vicariously fulfilled through the fantasy of romance novels (Radway, 1984):

1. The need to attain legitimacy, which in a patriarchal culture is achieved through the roles of wife and mother. The reader, therefore, identifies with the heroine because she is "catching" a man, thereby attaining legitimacy in the eyes of others.

2. The inherent need for nurturance, which is denied to women by a society that ascribes the female role of nurturing others (Radway, 1984; Miles, 1988). This need is vicariously fulfilled in the reader because in the story the hero protects, cares for, and nurtures the heroine.

Once again, as is the case with vicarious problem-solving, some researchers argue that the need fulfillment offered in romance novels is "false" and detrimental to women (Modleski, 1982; Radway, 1984; Jensen, 1984; Miles, 1988). These researchers suggest that if women turn to the fantasy fulfillment of romance novels, they are not likely to change their own circumstances to seek fulfillment in reality.

Thurston (1987) counters these criticisms by suggesting that there is no evidence that readers turn to the fantasy of romance in place of working for actual social change. Compared to the general population, romance readers may, in fact, be more active politically and socially. Of the 600 participants in Thurston's survey, more than 80% voted in the 1984 U.S. election. This stands

in contrast to the general population, only two-thirds of whom voted in that same election. The romance readers who voted in the 1984 election overwhelmingly voted Democrat as well (45%). Only one-fourth consider themselves to be Republican. This also stands in contrast to the general population, who voted in a Republican president.

Thurston (1987) argues that reading contemporary erotic romance novels even has positive effects because of the nontraditional heroine portrayed. Reading the novels allows readers to explore new ideas about the role and status of women in society before incorporating them into their own lives. The new heroine, according to Thurston, is a modern, nontraditional woman whose focus is largely on her career and her own identity. In general, the fantasy of romance novels provides an escape for women.

> Their fantasies are understandable...compensation for the lack of options in their lives. Women who read romances are fantasizing about freedom. (Jensen, 1984, p.153)

Adolescent Romance Novels

One of the first discussions of the adolescent romance novel appeared in the November 1981 issue of the periodical Interracial Books for Children Bulletin, which examined the topic of the new adolescent series romance lines. It contains several articles about the teen series romance business, and analyses of the content of "Wildfire", "Wishing Star", "First Love", and "Sweet Dreams", focusing on the gender stereotypes contained in all of the lines. Several articles about parents' and teachers' negative reactions to

these lines are also included, along with the business' defense against these criticisms.

The November 13, 1981 issue of the periodical Publishers' Weekly also examines adolescent series romance novels as part of its special report on the romance publishing business. Several articles are featured about the entire production process from story content, to titles and covers, to marketing strategies.

It is important to note, however, that the cited articles in the aforementioned periodicals were brief articles, written by writers, journalists, business people, and child educators; they were not written by social scientists studying the area.

The majority of the remaining literature on the subject of adolescent romances, series romances in particular, is in the form of popular articles in newspapers and magazines. Linda K. Christian-Smith has done the only comprehensive study of adolescent romance novels and their readers, reflected in her series of publications in 1987, 1988, and 1990. She completed a textual analysis of 34 teen romance novels from three periods:

Period I--1942-59

Period II--1963-79

Period III--1980-82

Her analysis focused on the three recurrent themes of romance, beautification, and sexuality, and the roles they play in the creation of the definitions and ideology of femininity for adolescent girls.

Christian-Smith finds fairly consistent constructions of

femininity throughout all three periods, even given varying historical contexts. In general, there is dissonance between book content and historical reality. Period I novels portray gender harmony, with romance the natural outcome, and a focus on heart and hearth by the heroines. These characteristics deny the historical milieu of war-time and post-war work for women. Period II novels show a slight lessening of the Period I characteristics, and a degree of questioning and challenging of traditional gender relations. To some extent, these novels reflect women's struggles of the time, especially related to sexuality. Period III novels are characterized by a return to the Period I characteristics of gender harmony, heart and hearth, and a lack of concern with careers. The portrayal of these characteristics deny the historical reality of the early 1980s. The images portrayed in Period III novels favour the position of the New Right, a moral and political movement advocating a return to the family and traditional gender roles.

In her most recent publication, Christian-Smith (1990) includes the results of a reader survey (n=75) and interviews (n=29) in three schools. The readers of adolescent romance novels gave the following reasons for their reading behaviour: (a) escape from home and family problems; (b) better reading than "dreary" textbooks (p.105); (c) enjoyment and pleasure; and (d) to learn about romance and dating. Christian-Smith's suggestion is that adolescent girls read these novels to form a basis for the construction of their own definitions of femininity. Her

conclusion is that teen romance novels construct a traditional definition of femininity and individualize gender/romance problems. This is a parallel argument to those provided by several researchers of adult romances.

Although Christian-Smith provides a good overview of adolescent romances her work does have some limitations. First her interview results may not be representative of all adolescent romance readers; the interviewees had all been labelled reluctant readers who read teen romances as part of the curriculum used to encourage reading (High Interest, Low Ability books). Most of these girls were targeted as those most likely to experience problems such as early pregnancy and prematurely halted schooling. Their occupational goals tended to focus on unskilled, semi-skilled, and generalized labour (Christian-Smith, 1987).

Another limitation of her work is that she treats all romances as identical. She does not differentiate between single-title, series, and soap-opera series romances. Only three series romances are included in the sample, yet she generalizes her conclusions to contemporary teen series romances as a whole.

Her 1990 publication has the same focus as her 1987 publication, for which the research was done in the early and mid-1980s. She does not look at any adolescent series romances after 1982, which was only their second year in the market. She does not address the social or literary changes since that time, nor does she address the radically altered composition of the adolescent book market. She applies the results of her analysis of

1980-82 series romances to adolescent girls entering the 1990s. As a result, a great deal of social and literary information is missed.

The next chapter deals with the changed composition of the adolescent romance novel market, and describes this research project which has arisen from these changes.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

Although the sales for adolescent series romances were initially staggering, at the present time only one-third of the twelve lines present in the mid-1980s remain. Scholastic's "Wildfire", "Wishing Star", and "Windswept" are still in print, and are only available through Scholastic's Teenage Bookclub; they are no longer sold in stores. Bantam's "Sweet Dreams" is the only other line still in print, and it is the only line available in bookstores.

This research will pose certain questions about the change that has occurred and attempt to answer them. The answers to those questions may become the basis for future research.

Focus of Interest

The focus of this research is the decline of the adolescent series romance novel in the marketplace. Why have the majority of teen series romance lines gone out of print after facing initially staggering success? The initial focus will be on the content of these novels as an explanation of the adolescent series romance genre's decline. That is, there may be something in the content of the novels that can explain this phenomenon. Three questions have been posed as a guide to this research.

Research Questions

QUESTION #1: HAVE ADOLESCENT GIRLS TURNED TO "SWEET DREAMS" AS A ROMANTIC READING CHOICE?

There may be something in the content of "Sweet Dreams"

relative to the failed lines that could help explain its popularity. Popular culture must change as social conditions change in order to survive (Thurston, 1987). Perhaps "Sweet Dreams" was the only line to adequately address the real changes that were occurring in adolescent girls' lives and the resulting changes in what they wanted in a romance novel.

QUESTION #2: ARE ADOLESCENT GIRLS READING ANOTHER TYPE OF ROMANCE NOVEL?

There are two alternatives here. The first alternative is that, as was the case prior to the introduction of the adolescent series romance, teenage girls are once again reading adult series romances, such as Harlequin and Silhouette. There may be something in the content of adult series romances that makes them more attractive to today's teenage girls than romances targeted at their own age group.

The second alternative is that adolescent girls have shifted to soap opera series romances, particularly Bantam's "Sweet Valley High" line, which focuses on twins Jessica and Elizabeth Wakefield and their friends. The soap opera series romance was introduced in 1983, when "Sweet Valley High" began publication. This was the time during which regular series romances were experiencing their peak. After this point, teen series romance lines gradually experienced a declining presence in the marketplace, but the adolescent soap opera series line flourished, with new lines being introduced throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s.

QUESTION #3: HAVE ADOLESCENT GIRLS, DURING THE COURSE OF THE 1980S, INCREASINGLY TURNED AWAY FROM ROMANCE NOVELS?

Perhaps, over time and with the advancement of feminism, the content of romance novels has become nonreflective of adolescent girls' lives. For example, research has shown that girls with higher educational aspirations read fewer romance novels than girls with lower educational aspirations (Baker, 1985; Christian-Smith, 1987). More of today's teenage girls may have high educational and occupational goals than was the case ten or fifteen years ago. If the content of romance novels has not accommodated such changes, then the reading of romance novels may have declined.

After examining these research questions, one final question will remain to be answered--QUESTION #4: IF CHANGES IN READING HABITS HAVE OCCURRED, WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RAMIFICATIONS OF THESE CHANGES?

If girls are reading one particular type of romance novel, they will be exposed to certain portrayals of gender roles and relations, which in turn may affect what they perceive to be their own roles in society; these portrayals will be examined. If, for some reason, there has been a decline in adolescents reading romance novels, again there will be certain implications and expectations for the future that will be examined.

Butler and Paisley (1980) report that three general frameworks are used for studying media, particularly in relation to gender portrayal. First is content analysis, which provides the initial framework for analysis of any media form. "Sexism focuses attention first on media content, since it is content that shapes audience's surrogate reality" (p.55). Second is an institutional

analysis which focuses on "the conditions by which sexism enters media content" (p.55). Third is audience analysis, which may include demographic characteristics, knowledge variables (i.e. what the consumer is learning from media content), and belief and action variables (i.e. what effects media content, in its sociocultural milieu, has on the consumer's beliefs and subsequent behaviours).

The analysis in this research focuses on a content analysis, although the other two frameworks will be addressed to some extent as well, in comparing the analysis of content to current and changing social conditions, and in the discussion of the potential ramifications of current romantic reading behaviour.

Content Analysis

A content analysis may be quantitatively or qualitatively based. Both are equally valid, depending on the issues being addressed. A quantitative analysis addresses the manifest, or obvious, content and is therefore best suited to assess media performance. For example, a quantitative analysis might examine the proportion of female characters with full-time careers. A qualitative analysis is able to address latent, or hidden, content, and therefore is best suited for assessing media socialization. For example, while a quantitative analysis can discover what proportion of adolescent characters' mothers work outside the home, it says nothing about how the mother's career is treated in the story and what messages readers are receiving about it; for this, a qualitative analysis is needed.

This research has both quantitative and qualitative elements

contained within the content analysis checklists. The framework for these checklists was created within a Feminist Materialist perspective, as discussed by Roman and Christian-Smith (1988).

Feminist Materialism

The feminist materialist perspective is an outgrowth of the historical materialist perspective, which suggests that any social institution has meaning and plays a role only within a specific historical context. While the historical materialist perspective has broadly-defined social institutions as the target of study, the feminist materialist perspective has gender as the target of study. Feminist materialists suggest that definitions of femininity, along with underlying gender roles and relations, are meaningful only within a specific historical context; they must be placed within their economic, political, and social contexts, and these contexts must be historicized. As with historical materialism, feminist materialism focuses on the roles of popular culture in social control and social change.

> Popular cultural forms matter for feminist materialist struggle because they are involved intimately in securing and producing the consent of women and men to particular hegemonic meanings for gender...and sexual differences. (pp.3-4)

A feminist materialist analysis of popular cultural forms examines the role of gendered ideologies in the production of popular cultural forms as commodities and in the social relations surrounding their consumption.

There is, however, more to feminist cultural studies than

having women as a focus of research (Roman & Christian-Smith, 1988). Any research project must include (a) an adequate concept of gender, and (b) an understanding of women's subordination or rebellion in terms of the relative male position--women and men must be treated as related cohorts.

This research satisfies both of these requirements. Regarding the latter stipulation, this content analysis addresses both the male and female characters, as individuals and in relation to each other. Regarding the first stipulation--an adequate concept of gender--this research uses the concept of gender suggested by Joan Scott (1986). Briefly, Scott defines gender as being composed of (a) culturally available symbols, (b) normative concepts, (c) kinship systems, and (d) subjective identities. These form four dimensions of the content analysis. Two additional dimensions, (e) territory and (f) sexuality, are also part of the content analysis, having been drawn from the findings of existing research on romance novels.

Within each dimension, several questions are asked of the content. These questions are drawn from the findings of existing research as well as from preliminary analyses of the novels involved. Analysis focuses on the hero and heroine, although other characters are examined where it is appropriate.

Sample

Four categories of romance novels were examined, based upon the research questions postulated.

1. "Sweet Dreams"--this is the only original adolescent series romance line that remains in bookstores.

2. "Sweet Valley High"--this is the first, and still the most popular adolescent soap opera series romance line.

3. The adult series romance lines "Harlequin Temptation" and "Silhouette Desire"--these are the two most popular adult series romance lines, and are those reported to have the most "modern" heroines and the most extensive sexual content.

4. Failed teen series romance lines--these are those that are no longer being published.

The time period covered begins in 1980, the year adolescent series romance lines were introduced. A total of 39 novels were analyzed, 10 from each of the first three categories, and 9 from the last "failed" category (only 9 were used in this category because of the difficulty in finding copies of the novels). An attempt was made to distribute the 10 books in each category across the early, mid, and late 1980s/early 1990s. For those lines still in print, books from the early 1990s are included in order to ensure an adequate picture of what <u>today's</u> teenage girls may be learning. No other specifications were made for the book selection process--the goal was a representative distribution of the content of the novels over the time period specified.

Although the same six dimensions were used, a different content analysis checklist was developed for the adolescent and the adult novels. This was done to adequately address the differential content components; certain features of the novels will differ for those featuring adolescent characters and those featuring adult characters. Other differences between the two checklists are the

result of what preliminary analysis revealed to be characteristics of the adult versus adolescent novels involved.

Content Analysis Checklist--Adolescent Novels

Culturally Available Symbols

1. Does the story portray feminism within traditional institutions and relationships? This was found to be the case in the research that has been done on adult series romances. Although the heroines in the stories stand up to the heroes, refuse to be swayed by the opinions of others, and go out and get what they want, these features are usually entwined within the romantic relationship and within traditional gender roles and relations. This is because the readers want to "realize some of the benefits of feminism within [the] traditional institutions and relationships" (Radway, 1984, p.79) with which they are more familiar, and feel safe within (i.e. there is less risk involved).

2. Are the heroine's nontraditional characteristics shown through her actions or merely through narrative assertions? This question is also drawn from adult series romance research, which has found that nontraditional characteristics are primarily portrayed through simple narrative assertions rather than through the heroine's actions. This relates to the first question in that because readers want to stay within traditional institutions and relationships, all that is necessary to perceive the heroine as independent is a simple assertion rather than overt actions; it is acceptable to the reader if these statements never crystallize as actions (Radway, 1984).

3. Are the "feminist" relationships, institutions, and issues contradicted by the action depicted in the story? For example, the heroine may be labelled "independent" in the narration of the story, and yet her actions might be perceived as lacking independence, such as relying on the hero to "rescue" her from problematic situations.

4. Are the traditional characteristics contradicted by the narrative assertions or heroine's actions?

Normative Concepts

1. Characters' attitudes toward gender roles as seen through their expressions or actions.

2. Relative strength/weakness of the hero and heroine. Several researchers who have studied adult series romances have found that the hero always has greater strength than the heroine (Modleski, 1982; Radway, 1984; Jensen, 1984). In fact, as the heroines have become stronger, it has been suggested that the heroes have had to gain in strength as well, due to the readers' perceptions of men being intimidated by strong women; thus, the hero must continue to be stronger in order for the story to remain believable (Jensen, 1984).

3. Does the hero conform to the traditional male gender role, as defined by David and Brannon (1976)?

a. No Sissy Stuff

b. the Big Wheel

c. the Sturdy Oak

d. Give 'em Hell

4. Does the heroine conform to the traditional female role of heart and hearth? In her work done on adolescent romances since the 1940s and the lives of adolescent girls, Christian-Smith (1987, 1988, 1990) has used the phrase "heart and hearth" to summarize the focus of the traditional female gender role. "Heart" signifies the traditional woman's focus on love, romance, marriage, and family, while "hearth" signifies her focus on the traditional female activities within the home--cooking, cleaning, and interior decorating.

Kinship Systems

1. Roles played by mother and father.

2. Parental goals/expectations for their children.

3. Roles of the children in the home, based on gender.

4. Familial social status of the hero and heroine. Social status is determined by the references that are usually made to careers of the parents, material possessions, and whether the adolescents need to work part-time to buy the things they want. Frequent references are made by the characters to social status itself. For example, a middle-class girl might differentiate herself from wealthier or poorer families in the story.

5. Number and ages of siblings; family size.

6. Are there any unmarried role model women or negative role model women for the heroine?

Subjective Identities

1. Principal goals/aspirations of the hero and heroine (i.e. educational, occupational, personal).

2. Degree of romantic experience. Both adult and adolescent research suggest that the hero usually has more romantic experience than the heroine, and that the heroine, in fact, usually has little or no romantic experience at all (Christian-Smith, 1987, 1988, 1990; Modleski, 1982; Radway, 1984; Jensen, 1984).

3. Job outside of school? Research done on adolescents has found that girls have part-time jobs more often than boys do (Baker, 1985b).

4. Is the heroine's rebellion against male authority "childish"? The heroines in adult series romances are characterized by rebellion against male authority in general, and the heroes' authority in particular. The rebellion of the heroines, however, is usually childish in that it involves over-reacting, temper tantrums, crying, and a denial of their true feelings; it usually is ineffectual in nature, with the heroes either ignoring it or mocking it (Modleski, 1982; Radway, 1984).

5. Nature of the romantic conflict. For example, is it the result of misunderstandings (one-sided or mutual) or actual attitudes or behaviours that must be changed?

6. Does the heroine sacrifice some part of herself in the end of the story? Is there an underlying message that women must give up something in order to enjoy the interests of a man?

Territory

1. Whose territory does the story take place in, the hero's or the heroine's? In adult series romances the story usually takes place in the hero's territory, territory that is completely foreign to

the heroine. This contributes to the power differential that usually exists in their relationship (Modleski, 1982; Radway, 1984; Jensen, 1984).

Sexuality

1. To what extent is sexuality addressed? This includes behaviours, attitudes, and feelings, and whether they are mentioned at all, the extent to which they are described, and the ways in which they are described. Is sexuality a part of the characters' perceptions, in terms of labeling someone "sexy", for example? Is sexuality a part of everyday life, with characters trying to dress or act erotically or sensually? Do the characters experience erotic or sexual physical feelings? What behaviours are engaged in (chaste kissing, passionate kissing, petting, intercourse, etc.) and to what degree are these sexual interactions described? How are these interactions described? Are they described in terms of emotions or romance (e.g. "loving", "sweet", "warm"), or are they described in terms of physical feelings (e.g. "electric", "tingling", "throbbing")?

Christian-Smith (1987, 1988, 1990) suggests that while adolescent novels of the 1970s had a moderate degree of sexual content, those of the early 1980s, including teen series romances, are characterized by a denial of adolescent sexuality, with a return to the 1950s' descriptions of chaste kisses and nothing more.

Content Analysis Checklist--Adult Novels

The questions asked in the dimensions of "culturally available

symbols" and "normative concepts" are the same as those asked in those dimensions of the adolescent checklist. This is because although the particulars of the characters' lifestyles may differ for adolescents and for adults in terms of kinship, subjective identities, and sexuality, the underlying messages and gender portrayals are similar.

Kinship Systems

1. Presence and roles of hero/heroine's family in the story. Because the characters are adults, their parents are likely to have less of a presence and differing roles in the characters' lives compared to the adolescent characters in the other novels.

2. Familial social status while growing up.

3. Are/were there any positive or negative role model women for the heroine during her lifetime?

4. Does the hero or heroine have any children? If so, sex and ages.

5. Marital status.

6. Desire for marriage and/or family expressed?

7. Sex and ages of siblings.

Subjective Identities

1. Age of hero/heroine. In adult novels the hero is virtually always older than the heroine, often by as many as twelve or more years (Modleski, 1982; Radway, 1984; Jensen, 1984, Thurston, 1987).

2. Social status of hero/heroine. Social status is determined by references to occupation, income, material possessions, and social status itself. Previous research finds that the hero is usually of

a higher social status than the heroine, which contributes to his power over her (Modleski, 1982; Radway, 1984; Jensen, 1984).

3. Occupation.

4. Principal goals/aspirations.

5. Educational attainment.

6. Is the heroine's rebellion against male authority "childish"?

7. Is the relationship entered into freely or reluctantly on the part of the hero/heroine?

8. Does the heroine sacrifice some part of herself or her life in the end?

9. Nature of the romantic conflict.

10. Nature of the ending of the story (e.g. engagement, marriage).

11. Does the hero or heroine have a basic distrust of the opposite sex, and if so, why? Preliminary analysis suggested the prevalence of this feature, which often contributes to the nature of the conflict.

12. Who initiates the relationship?

13. Nature of the initial relationship (e.g. business, sexual).

14. Who resolves the conflict at the end of the story?

15. Degree of romantic experience.

Territory

1. Whose territory does the story take place in?

Sexuality

1. To what extent is sexuality addressed?

2. Is contraception or safe sex addressed, and to what extent?

3. Does the heroine become pregnant at the end of the story? Hall

and colleagues (1980) suggest that the hero becomes committed to the heroine after recognizing her maternity or potential maternity.

4. Who takes control of their sexual encounters?

In the next chapter, the results of the content analysis, in terms of the research questions posed, will be presented.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this chapter, the content analysis results will be summarized for each of the four lines examined--"failed" adolescent series romances; "Sweet Dreams", the only original adolescent series romance still available in bookstores; "Sweet Valley High", the original adolescent soap opera series romance; and adult series romances. For a list of the novels used in each of the lines, as well as brief plot summaries, see the Appendix.

"Failed" Adolescent Series Romance Novels

Because the central question of this research addresses the decline of the teen series romance genre, the content analysis results of the failed teen lines will be presented first.

Culturally Available Symbols

Does the story portray feminism within traditional institutions and relationships (see table 1.1)?

In the majority of adolescent series romances no longer in print, there is no effort made to portray feminism (n=8). In the one book that does portray feminism, feminism is not contained within traditional institutions or relationships--it is portrayed strongly and effectively. The heroine is a strong girl who can take care of herself and has her own life. Although there is the occasional mention of interest in a boy, this is not frequent and is only mentioned briefly. Romance does not control her life by any means. It must be noted, however, that this is not a typical romance novel. A romantic relationship does not develop between

the hero and heroine, and the central plot of the book is not the attempt to develop a romantic relationship; rather, the hero and heroine are thrown together to try to solve a mystery. Romantic interest is merely mentioned in passing--she notices a good-looking boy, wonders what dating him would be like, and then goes on with her own life and the activities planned.

Are the heroine's nontraditional characteristics shown primarily through her actions or through narrative assertions (see table 1.2)?

In most of the failed books analyzed the heroines have no explicitly nontraditional characteristics (n=5). The remaining books featuring heroines with nontraditional characteristics show those traits primarily through the heroines' actions rather than through simple narrative assertions.

Are the feminist relationships, institutions, and issues contradicted by the action depicted in the story (see table 1.3)?

The majority of books do not represent any feminist relationships, institutions, or issues (n=5). Of the four books that do contain feminist elements, three contradict those elements with the action in the story. In one story, while there is an explicit argument against assigning "women's" roles, all of the women in the story conform to those roles. Two of the stories feature heroines who appear strong, independent, intelligent, and relatively unconcerned with boys or romance; however, when they perceive another girl's interest in a boy, they suddenly become concerned about his attention and how they can compete with the

other girl over it, even to the extent of one of the heroines, a tomboy, buying a dress to impress him.

Are the traditional characteristics contradicted by the narrative assertions or heroine's actions (see table 1.4)?

Traditional characteristics are contradicted by five of the nine books analyzed. For example, one of the heroines comments to herself about how unfortunate it is that a woman as nice as her aunt must be submissive to her husband's authority, not showing her own personality. She just quietly goes about the house, cooking and cleaning, bending to her husband's needs and whims.

Normative Concepts

Characters' attitudes toward gender roles (see table 2.1).

The heroines of the novels are evenly distributed across traditional, egalitarian, and mixed attitudes toward gender roles (n=3) in each of the categories). The traditional attitudes are made more explicit than the others, however. For example:

> And suddenly she was saying too much. About wanting a home. Children. To grow daffodils in the spring time. Make apple jelly in the fall. Love and be loved. And, inspired by it all, when her husband had gone to work--happy and well-fed--and the children, stuffed with hot oatmeal, had settled down for naps, she would paint the world as she saw it. A virtual paradise! (2:p.61)

In another book the heroine remarks, stereotypically, " 'You know how practical boys are' "(6:p.122).

Most of the heroes in these novels hold mixed attitudes toward gender roles, neither explicitly traditional nor explicitly egalitarian (n=4). Fewer heroes, in fact, compared to the heroines, hold traditional attitudes toward gender roles (n=2

versus n=3). An equal number of heroes and heroines have egalitarian attitudes (n=3).

Relative strength/weakness of the hero and heroine (see table 2.2).

Four of the nine books in this category feature a hero and heroine who are approximately equal in strength. There are more books, however, in which the hero is stronger than books in which the heroine is stronger (n=3 versus n=1). In one book, the heroine has greater strength for most of the story, but after realizing her love for the hero, she loses all of her strength, the hero then becoming the stronger character.

Does the hero conform to the traditional male gender role as summarized by David and Brannon (1976)--No Sissy Stuff, the Big Wheel, the Sturdy Oak, Give 'em Hell (see table 2.3)?

Four of the heroes do not conform to any of the components of the traditional male role. Only one hero conforms to the traditional male gender role in all four respects. The remaining books feature heroes who conform in varying degrees, with three conforming to only one element, and one conforming to three elements.

Does the heroine conform to the traditional female gender role of heart and hearth (see table 2.4)?

The majority of heroines in these novels conform to the traditional female gender role of heart and hearth. Five show a devotion to both heart and hearth, while another two are devoted to heart but not hearth. Only two of the heroines are not devoted to

either, and in both of these cases the story cannot be considered a true romance--the hero and heroine have a platonic relationship, with little, if any, romantic interest displayed. The focus of the stories is on solving mysteries, not on romance.

Kinship Systems

Parental roles.

Only three of the heroines' mothers work outside the home. One, now deceased, was a professor (field unknown), another works in a bank and was recently selected for a management training program, and the third is a math teacher at a middle school. Two of the mothers do not work outside the home, although one of them helps her husband with his job as a caretaker in a resort town. In four cases it is not clear whether or not the mother has a career.

Only two of the heroes' mothers are mentioned as having a career. For the remainder it is unknown. One of the mothers works in a library, while the other's particular job is not mentioned. When mothers are mentioned, it is usually in reference to meal preparation and grocery shopping rather than their jobs.

In contrast, when fathers are present and are mentioned, it is usually in relation to their careers. The heroines' fathers' careers include a resort caretaker who also runs the general store during the tourist season, an insurance broker, a geology professor, a dean of students at a high school, and a doctor who specializes in five related fields. The heroes' fathers' jobs include a novelist and a district manager for an insurance company.

In four cases the hero's father is not present, two due to

death and two due to abandonment. In two other cases, the hero's mother is deceased. Two of the heroines have a deceased father, two have a deceased mother. The heroine's family is mentioned much more frequently and in greater detail than is the hero's family.

Parental goals and expectations for their children.

In the majority of cases, no parental goals or expectations are expressed. This is the case for six of the heroines and all of the heroes. In one case the heroine's parents expect her to get above-average grades. In another case the heroine's mother, who is employed outside the home, expects her to go to college so she can earn her own living rather than depend on someone else.

> "The world doesn't owe anybody a living, she says, so we have to do for ourselves. I'm not wild about that philosophy, but I think she's right." (7:p.39)

In the third case parental expectations are much more traditional. The heroine's parents expect her to take care of her younger brother and do the housework.

Roles of children in the home (see table 3.1).

Only eight of the nine books were analyzed in relation to this issue. One of the books, although targeted at adolescents, features adult characters who live on their own.

None of the heroes are mentioned in relation to their roles in the home. In contrast, most of the heroines are mentioned in this respect (n=5), and in all of these cases the heroine's role is traditional--helping the mother with cooking, cleaning, and child care. The heroes are never mentioned in relation to any of these activities.

Familial social status (see tables 3.2a and 3.2b).

The majority of the heroines' families are middle-class (n=5). Another two can be considered upper-middle-class, while the remaining two are working class. An equal number of the heroes' families are middle-class (n=3) and working-class (n=3), with another two upper-middle-class and another one lower-middle-class. None of either the heroes' or heroines' families are upper-class. More heroines than heroes are middle-class (5:3), while more heroes than heroines are working-class (3:2).

In the vast majority of books (n=7) the familial social status of the hero and heroine is equal. In the remaining two books, the heroine's family is of a higher social status than the hero's.

Number and ages of siblings; family size (see table 3.3).

In most of the stories, both the hero and heroine are the only children in the family (n=5). In one case for both characters the presence of siblings in unknown. Three heroes and heroines have siblings. Family size is usually small. Of the heroines who have siblings, in two cases she has only one sibling. In one instance the heroine has two siblings, one older and one younger. The heroine has a sister or sisters in two stories. A younger brother is present in one case. Two of the heroes have one sibling, an older brother. In only one book is there a large family--one hero has five siblings (three brothers and two sisters), all grade-school age or younger. The heroine is more likely than the hero to have younger siblings (3/3 versus 1/3).

Are there any role model women, positive or negative, for the heroine (see table 3.4)?

In six of the nine books analyzed, there is no role model woman for the heroine. When a role model woman is present, she is a negative role model in two cases, and a positive role model in one case. One of the negative role model women is the heroine's classical guitar teacher (world-famous), who moved to the area due to her husband's career. The other negative role model is the heroine's speech teacher, who appears to be a positive role model at first, but then becomes involved in a romantic relationship with the heroine's father; at this point that is how the heroine begins perceiving her and the story begins portraying her. The one positive role model is a heroine's mother, who is widowed. She is a strong, independent woman who insists that the heroine develop her own identity, interests, and life, complete with a college education and career.

Subjective Identities

Principle goals and aspirations of the hero and heroine.

Hero--The goal of two of the heroes are unknown. For those heroes expressing goals, that goal is most often college (n=3), followed by family-related goals (n=2). One hero's goal is to start a relationship with the heroine. Only one hero expresses a particular career goal, that of becoming a pilot.

Heroine--All of the heroines express some goals. Most often this goal is college (n=5). The second most frequently expressed goal is very traditional in nature, that is, to attract the hero or some other boy (n=3). An equal number of heroines (n=2) express goals related to their grades, helping their families, a part-time

job, a future career, and attractiveness. The two heroines expressing goals related to grades want to graduate at the top of their classes. Of the two heroines planning careers, one wants to be a classical guitarist and the other is deciding among journalism, law, and politics.

Degree of romantic experience (see tables 4.1a and 4.1b).

The extent of the heroine's romantic experience is more often known than is the hero's. In more than half of the stories the extent of the hero's experience is not mentioned (n=5), while the same can only be said for one of the heroines. Overall, the heroines have very little romantic experience. More than half have either no experience at all or limited experience (n=6). Those girls with limited experience (n=3) have usually gone on a few dates, but have dated as friends rather than as romantic prospects. Two heroines have had extensive dating experience, although casual.

In contrast, none of the heroes are inexperienced, and only one has had limited experience--in this case, he has had only one prior relationship, although it was serious (marriage was discussed). Most of the heroes for whom romantic experience is known have had extensive experience (n=3), with reputations for flirting with girls.

For the relationships for which the degree of romantic experience is known for both characters, there are no cases where the heroine has had more experience than the hero. In two cases the hero has had more experience, and in two cases both the hero and heroine have had extensive experience.

Does the hero or heroine have a part-time job outside of school (see table 4.2)?

The majority of characters do have jobs outside of school. Six of the heroes and five of the heroines hold part-time jobs. The heroes' jobs include working in a McDonald's, a stockboy, doing airplane repairs, a mechanic, and a clerk in a department store. The heroines' jobs include working in her father's store, working in a library, working in a record store (preceded by babysitting when younger), a clerk in a department store, and occasional babysitting.

Is the heroine's rebellion against male authority childish (see table 4.3)?

None of the nine novels in this category feature a heroine who rebels against the authority of men or boys to any extent. Instead there is a peaceful coexistence and gender harmony, as noted by Christian-Smith (1987, 1988, 1990).

Does the heroine sacrifice part of herself at the end of the story (see table 4.4)?

None of the heroines sacrifice any part of themselves or their lifestyles at the end of the story. In one case the heroine sacrifices her pride to the pseudo-hero during the course of the story, but she then sees the error in her ways and learns to be true to herself.

Nature of the romantic conflict (see table 4.5).

In three of the nine books in this category there is no real romantic relationship involved, so there is no romantic conflict.

In the remaining books, the nature of the conflict varies--neither realizes their feelings for the other at first (n=2), the heroine does not realize her interest in the hero, the heroine misunderstands the hero, the heroine is unsure of the hero's feelings toward her, and the heroine is dying of a brain tumor so she does not want to get involved with the hero. It is interesting to note that in four of the six books featuring a romantic conflict, the conflict is due to misperceptions on the part of the heroine.

Territory

Whose territory does the story take place in (see table 5.1)?

The story takes place in the heroine's territory in four of the books analyzed. Mutual territory forms the setting for the story in three of the novels. One story takes place in territory that is foreign to both the hero and the heroine. Only one story takes place in the hero's territory.

Sexuality

To what extent is sexuality addressed in the novel?

In general, sexuality is not acknowledged among the characters in the failed romances. Kissing is the limit in behaviour, and only occurs in five of the nine books analyzed. The kisses are clearly described in emotional, romantic terms rather than physical terms. For example:

> But in that moment Brian's kiss erased everything that had ever happened before and swept away all though about things to come. Only the two of us existed, just me and Brian floating in a velvet bubble. (1:p.175)

In four of the books analyzed there is no sexual behaviour

whatsoever--even holding hands does not occur on the first date.

Even in the one book featuring young adult characters, the hugs and kisses are love-filled and emotional rather than physical. Pre-marital sexual activity is addressed at one point, but only in order to strongly condemn it.

> Something clicked in her brain then. Something she believed she had heard in the examining room: "You mean she's pregnant?"
>
> Surely she had been imagining things. Paul couldn't have asked that...though that of her...been so quick to jump to an ugly conclusion with their wedding just weeks ahead!
>
> But he had. With a sick heart, Lorelei remembered clearly then. And his next words led her to guess that he was still unconvinced she was pure [emphasis added]. (2:p.132)

One of the books seems to have "token" sexuality--their first kiss is described in semi-erotic terms:

> "I can't think of a better way to spend the evening," John murmured to Ashley, burying his faced in her hair and gently nuzzling her neck. "I've been wanting to do this since the first day I saw you." (8:p.132)

This is an isolated feature in the story, however. It comes out of nowhere and then it never happens again; there is an immediate return to warm, chaste kisses on the cheeks and the nose.

Summary

Most noticeable about the failed teen series romance novels are their traditional and conservative nature. Although the heroes are typically presented in an egalitarian manner, all other components of the novels--the heroines, family members, and the nature of the romantic relationship overall--are characterized by traditionality. Particularly salient is the lack of sexuality, considering adolescent romance novels in the 1970s did include some sexual content (Christian-Smith, 1987, 1988, 1990); the failed teen

series romances analyzed here are characterized by a virtual absence of the issue.

"Sweet Dreams"

The content analysis results of "Sweet Dreams", which is one of the few teen series romance lines still in print and the only one still sold in bookstores, will now be presented.

Culturally Available Symbols

Is feminism portrayed within traditional institutions and relationships (see table 1.1)?

In six of the ten books in this category feminism is portrayed within traditional institutions and relationships. In these stories the heroine learns the importance of being true to oneself, developing one's identity, and striving towards one's goals--if a boy does not like you the way you are, then he is not worth liking. It is usually through the hero, however, that the heroine learns these lessons, and she is rewarded by the hero's love. These heroines may work hard to achieve their goals, but they work even harder to gain the hero's love.

In two of the novels feminism is also portrayed, but is not contained within traditional institutions and relationships. These heroines set their goals and strive for them, and develop their own identities before becoming involved with the hero or with dating in general. At the end, however, these heroines are still rewarded for their action by the hero's love.

Only two of the ten novels in this category do not attempt to portray feminism to any extent.

Are the heroine's nontraditional characteristics shown primarily through her actions or through narrative assertions (see table 1.2)?

The majority of books feature heroines whose nontraditional traits are shown primarily through their actions rather than through simple narrative assertions (n=6). Three of the stories present the heroine's nontraditional characteristics primarily through narrative assertions. Only one heroine is not associated with any nontraditional characteristics.

Are the feminist relationships, institutions, and issues contradicted by the action depicted in the story (see table 1.3)?

Although feminist relationships, institutions, and issues are apparent in nine of the books, more than half of them have these features contradicted by the action depicted in the story (n=5). One heroine wants to become a successful novelist, and is working very hard to develop her skills, but her devotion is tied to the potential she perceives in her career leading to the romantic attention of men.

Another heroine criticizes her friends for cancelling plans when a date comes along, yet her own focus is overwhelmingly on attracting a boy. She, too, begins neglecting her friends when she meets a boy she is interested in.

The clearest example of contradictions is found in a story in which the heroine goes on a youth cycling trip. The trip leader/chaperone is a strong, independent, mature, respected young woman throughout the trip. When the trip is completed, however,

and she receives a bouquet of roses from her boyfriend, she "giggles" (12:p.170).

Four of the books portraying feminist relationships do not have these features contradicted. For example, in one book the heroine, who wants to become a private investigator, decides to develop her skills by solving a mystery involving thefts from the gymnasium at the school. She knows what she wants to do, is confident about her abilities, and does what she set out to do, without allowing her feelings for the hero to interfere, solving the mystery and saving the day.

In only one book are feminist elements not presented in any way.

Are the traditional characteristics contradicted by the narrative assertions or the heroine's actions (see table 1.4)?

Overwhelmingly, when traditional elements are presented they are not contradicted, at least not immediately. Traditional elements are contradicted in only two of the ten books. In one case the hero immediately corrects himself after expressing surprise that the heroine is the sports writer for the school newspaper. In the second case, when the few traditional elements appear, they are continuously contradicted by the heroine's entire personality and demeanor--traditional characteristics are completely out of character for her.

Normative Concepts

Characters' attitudes toward gender roles (see table 2.1).

generally egalitarian in their attitudes toward gender roles (n=8). In one story the hero and heroine express mixed attitudes, and in only one story do the hero and heroine express traditional attitudes toward gender roles:

> He drove around to the Abbot's back gate and jumped out, swiftly running to my side of the car to open my door. Paul evidently had been taught all the nice things, the proper things with the opposite sex. (10:p.89)

It must be noted, however, that this book was the first in the "Sweet Dreams" line, published in 1981.

Relative strength/weakness of the hero and heroine (see table 2.2).

The hero and heroine have equal strength in four of the ten books in this category. When inequalities in relative strength do exist, they are usually in favour of the hero (n=5). In only one case is the heroine the stronger of the two characters.

Does the hero conform to the traditional male gender role--No Sissy Stuff, the Big Wheel, the Sturdy Oak, Give 'em Hell (see table 2.3)?

Half of the heroes (n=5) do not conform to any of the components of the traditional male gender role as defined by David and Brannon (1976). In fact these heroes are often explicitly nontraditional--not only do they not display any behaviours or attitudes that would adhere to the definitions, they also display characteristics like shyness, sensitivity, humility, and tenderness.

None of the heroes conform to all four elements of the traditional male role. The other half of the heroes (n=5) conform

to the traditional male role in varying degrees. One hero conforms to three of the elements, two of the heroes conform to two of the elements, and two of the heroes conform to only one of the elements.

Does the heroine conform to the traditional female gender role of heart and hearth (see table 2.4)?

Half of the stories (n=5) feature heroines who conform to both components of the traditional female role, heart and hearth. They show an orientation toward getting a boyfriend, and frequently do housework to calm themselves down or clear their minds. Three of the heroines show an orientation toward heart, but not hearth. Thus, a total of eight of the ten heroines are focused on romance. Only two of the heroines do not conform to heart nor hearth.

Kinship Systems

Parental roles.

The career status of most of the heroes' mothers is unknown (n=6). Two of the mothers do have jobs outside the home. One works in her husband's bookstore and the other used to be a geologist and is now a social worker. Two of the mothers are full-time homemakers. When the heroes' fathers' careers are mentioned, they include bookstore owner and novelist, lawyer, English professor, and geologist. Only one of the fathers has chronic unemployment problems, holding a series of part-time jobs.

The careers of the heroine's fathers are known in half of the novels. They include a salesman, a store owner and musician, an engineer, and a supermarket manager. In half of the novels the

heroine's mother has a career outside the home. The mothers' careers include teaching assistant (while going to night school to obtain teaching certificate), part-time nurse (soon to be full-time), executive director of an adopt-a-grandparent program, and owner of a kitchen specialty shop. One of the mothers is a full-time homemaker. The career status of four of the mothers is unknown.

Even when the mother in the story does work outside the home, she is mentioned more frequently in relation to household tasks, such as meal preparation, grocery shopping and cleaning. Her career is usually mentioned more as an aside, or in passing. In contrast, the father is usually mentioned in relation to his job--his duties, skills, and success. While the father may be mentioned coming home from work, the mother is mentioned performing household tasks.

Parental goals/expectations for their children.

In most of the books, parental goals for the hero are not mentioned (n=8). The two books in which parental goals are expressed feature the simple goal of attending college. On the other hand, half of the parents of the heroines express goals or expectations for their daughters (n=5). In two cases these goals are expressed very generally as "go after your dreams" or "pursue your goals". In one book the goal is college, in another the expectation is for the heroine to become a veterinarian, and in the third the goal is for the heroine to become an Elite gymnast (a level of gymnastic status that involves national competition) and then an Olympic gymnast.

Roles of the children in the home (see table 3.1).

The hero is rarely mentioned in relation to the home or household tasks (n=9). In one case the hero's task is somewhat nontraditional; he regularly helps his mother with the gardening. Most of the heroines are not mentioned in relation to household tasks either (n=7). The three heroines who are mentioned in this respect engage in traditional tasks, such as helping with dinner and setting the table. This is the case even when a male sibling is present and not helping.

Familial social status (see tables 3.2a and 3.2b).

Most of both the heroes and heroines live in middle-class families (four of the heroes and five of the heroines). Three of the heroes and heroines live in upper-middle-class families, and two heroines live in lower-middle-class families. One hero is in an upper-class family, and one hero is in a working-class family.

In most of the stories the familial social status of the hero and heroine is equal (n=6). When differentials do exist, they are evenly distributed in favour of the hero's and the heroine's families (n=2).

Number and ages of siblings/family size (see table 3.3).

For three of the heroes and one of the heroines it is not known whether they have any siblings. Half of the heroines do have siblings (n=5). The heroine's family is usually small. In each instance she has only one sibling, with the sibling being a sister in three cases and a brother in two cases. Three of the heroines have an older sibling, two have a younger sibling. In four of the books the heroine is the only child in the family.

Four of the heroes have siblings. Their families are usually small as well. Three of the heroes have one sibling and one hero has two siblings. In one of the books the hero has a brother; in the remaining three books he has a sister or sisters. Two of the heroes have younger siblings while two have older siblings.

Are there any role model women for the heroine (see table 3.4)?

There is no female role model for the heroine in the majority of the novels (n=7). In the three cases in which female role models are present, it is not clear whether they are positive or negative role models. The role models include historical and gothic romance authors, a female rock star, and a mother who encourages her daughter to go on a cycling trip to challenge herself, but in part because of her dislike for the daughter's boyfriend.

Subjective Identities

Principle goals and aspirations of the hero and heroine.

Hero--The most frequently mentioned goal of the heroes is college, and the heroes have particular colleges in mind, such as Harvard and MIT (n=4). Two of the heroes have particular career plans. One intends to be a lawyer, like his father, and the other plans to be an architect. Three of the heroes do not mention any goals.

Heroine--Most of the heroines in the novels do express goals (n=9). Seven of the heroines have specific career plans. Two of the heroines plan to be writers. Other career goals include

actress, private investigator, rock star, and gymnast. Only two of the heroines, however, express any plans for college. Other goals expressed by the heroines in these novels include family-related goals, goals related to popularity at school, and goals related to physical appearance.

Degree of romantic experience of the hero and heroine (see tables 4.1a and 4.1b).

The romantic experience of the heroine is known far more often than that of the hero (seven of the heroines versus three of the heroes). The hero's experience is either limited (n=2) or nonexistent (n=1). Half of the heroines have absolutely no dating experience, while another two have limited experience. None of the heroes or heroines have extensive experience.

In cases in which the romantic experience of both characters is known, inequalities are not apparent. The hero and heroine either are both inexperienced (n=1) or both have limited experience (n=2).

Does the hero or heroine have a job outside of school (see table 4.2)?

More than half of the heroes have part-time jobs (n=6). Their jobs include handyman, running errands for nursing home residents, freelance photographer, working in his father's pub in England, extra on a movie set, and janitor in a gymnasium.

Half of the heroines do not have jobs outside of school (n=5). Of those who do (n=4), their jobs include extra on a movie set, working in the family store, pet-helper, and working in a music

store plus playing in a rock band. In one case it is unclear whether the heroine has a job outside of school.

Is the heroine's rebellion against male authority childish (see table 4.3)?

It is rare for the heroine in these novels to openly rebel against male authority (n=1). In general there is peaceful coexistence and gender harmony. In the one case where there is rebellion, it is not childish; the heroine's rebellion is strong and effective.

Does the heroine sacrifice part of herself at the end of the story (see table 4.4)?

Most of the heroines do not sacrifice any part of themselves (n=8); in fact, they usually become stronger. In two cases the heroine does sacrifice part of herself. One of the books features a heroine who must swallow her pride in order for the hero to forgive her for her wrongdoings and return to her life. The other book features a heroine who repeatedly swallows her pride whenever she and the hero have an argument, because of her fear of losing him.

Nature of the romantic conflict (see table 4.5).

Mutual factors--mutual misunderstandings (n=2) and mutual distrust (n=2)--form the basis for the romantic conflict in four of the novels. The conflict in three of the books is a result of the heroine's perceptions--she is unsure of the hero's feelings for her, she is unaware of her feelings for him, or she misunderstands something the hero says or does. In two of the stories the

romantic conflict is a result of the hero's perceptions--he is jealous of the heroine's time away from him (n=1), or he is angry with her (n=1). A romantic conflict is not present in one of the books; instead, the hero dies.

Territory

Whose territory does the story take place in, the hero's or the heroine's (see table 5.1)?

In half of the books the story takes place in shared territory (n=5). One story occurs in foreign territory for both the hero and the heroine. Two stories take place in the hero's territory, and two stories take place in the heroine's territory.

Sexuality

To what extent is sexuality addressed in the novel?

Although the earliest books in the series lack sexual content (rare, chaste kisses that are emotionally or romantically described), in later books kissing becomes more prevalent, even becoming a common activity. Kisses remain predominantly romantic in nature rather than physical.

> My mouth met his in a sweet, velvet touch, like the softness of a butterfly. (10:p.109)

Toward the end of the 1980s sexuality becomes a larger part of the characters' lives, although it does not by any means run their lives.

> There was Susie Morgan, and she wasn't dressed to kill, she was dressed to slaughter. She looked like a cross between a Valley Girl and a pinup girl, and the effect was, well, paralyzing. She had on black net stockings, red spiked heels, a black miniskirt, and a red, off-the-shoulder dress. (11:pp.11-12)

Erotic, physical sexual feelings are subtly described, but are only

validated to a limited extent.

> Then, before I knew what was about to happen, Matt's arms folded around me, pressing me to him. "Rhonda," he murmured against my hair, so softly that the echoes could not mimic him. "You really are somebody special." (12:p.155)

The resolutions offered to these erotic feelings are unrealistic to some degree. After the erotic feelings are described, the resolution offered is to effortlessly cease kissing, hold hands, and walk into the sunset.

Summary

The content of this "successful" adolescent series romance line certainly is "sweet". Surface characteristics do address nontraditionality and issues of feminism. The heroines are characterized by independence, equality with males, and capability. Underlying these surface characteristics, however, are messages of traditionality; most notably, the heroine is rewarded for her independence and capability with the love of the hero. Sexuality is contained within the stories, although only to a small extent, and in a "sweet" and "loving" way.

"Sweet Valley High"

"Sweet Valley High" was the first, and is still the most popular, adolescent soap opera series romance line on the market. The content analysis results for this category of romances will now be presented.

Culturally Available Symbols

Is feminism portrayed within traditional institutions and relationships (see table 1.1)?

There is little or no attempt to portray feminism in the

majority of "Sweet Valley High" novels (n=7). Out of the three stories that do portray feminism, two portray it within traditional institutions and relationships. In one book the heroine learns the importance of maintaining one's own identity, independence and interests, being one complete person rather than only half of a couple. This lesson is learned, however, through her relationship with her boyfriend. As she becomes increasingly dependent, her boyfriend becomes disillusioned and breaks up with her. She is rewarded for discovering herself by regaining his interest and his love. There is a direct link between the heroine's personality and the hero's wishes. The moral that the heroine learns in the end is that having one's own life is important in case your boyfriend leaves you--at least you will have something left. In another book the heroine learns the importance of being herself instead of pretending to be someone else, but only after meeting a new boy who expresses interest in her while she is being herself.

Are the heroine's nontraditional characteristics primarily shown through her actions or through narrative assertions (see table 1.2)?

Almost half of the heroines in "Sweet Valley High" do not exhibit explicitly nontraditional characteristics (n=4). When the heroines do have nontraditional personality traits, those traits are usually perceivable through her actions and through events that occur in the story (n=5) rather than through simple narrative assertions.

Are the feminist relationships, institutions, and issues contradicted by the action depicted in the story (see table 1.3)?

Feminist elements are evident in only half of the books examined. In three of the stories in which they are evident, they are clearly contradicted by the action in the story. For example, the heroine in one story breaks up with her boyfriend because he wants her life to revolve around his, which outrages her. Yet after they break up, all she does is think about him; her schoolwork, extracurricular activities, and social life all suffer. Even when she is not with him, her life is revolving around him.

Are the traditional characteristics contradicted by the narrative assertions or the heroine's actions (see table 1.4)?

Traditional characteristics are evident in all ten of the stories analyzed, and in most instances these characteristics are not contradicted either by narrative assertions or the heroine's actions (n=8). In only two books are any immediate contradictions perceivable. Although in one of the stories the heroine's overwhelming concern is getting good-looking boyfriends, at one point she had to

> [resist] the urge to tell this baboon that she was nobody's "girl". (24:p.95)

In another book, the focus of the heroine's own life is romance.

> The thought of spending even a little time watching her boyfriend brought a smile to her lips. (27:p.1)

She criticizes another girl, however, who

> seemed empty-headed. All Heather talked about were clothes and Aaron. (27:p.22)

Normative Concepts

Characters' attitudes toward gender roles (see table 2.1).

The attitudes of both the hero and the heroine toward gender

roles are, in general, not clearly traditional nor egalitarian, but rather can be considered mixed, with some expressions of traditionality and some expressions of egalitarianism (n=9). None of the heroes hold solely traditional attitudes, although one of the heroines does. She is upset when her mother must work late.

> "Again?" Jessica pouted. "That makes three nights in a row! I thought mothers were supposed to stay home and fix dinner once in a while!" (20:p.108)

Conversely, none of the heroines hold solely egalitarian attitudes, although one of the heroes does. He breaks up with his girlfriend when he senses her becoming too dependent upon him.

> "Come on, Dee," Bill admonished. "Where's the independent girl I fell in love with?" (25:p.21)

Relative strength/weakness of the hero and heroine (see table 2.2).

There are no cases in the novels analyzed in which the heroine has greater strength than the hero. In most of the stories the hero is the stronger of the two characters (n=6). It is typical for the heroine to do anything and everything possible to get and keep the hero's attention. She is so happy to have him as a boyfriend that he essentially has complete control over the direction and nature of the relationship. Among three of the couples strength is equally shared. This does not mean that they have equal strength all of the time and in every situation, but rather at times he shows greater strength, while at other times she shows greater strength. In one case the relative strength of the hero and heroine cannot be determined because of the heroine's involvement with multiple partners.

Does the hero conform to the traditional male gender role--No Sissy Stuff, the Big Wheel, the Sturdy Oak, Give 'em Hell (see table 2.3)?

The heroes in half of the "Sweet Valley High" novels do not conform to any of the four components of the traditional male role (n=5). Another three of the heroes adhere to only one component of the definition. Two of the components of the definition are apparent in one of the heroes. Only one of the stories features a hero who conforms to the traditional male role in all respects.

Does the heroine conform to the traditional female role of heart and hearth (see table 2.4)?

In general, the heroines of these novels are much more traditional than their male counterparts. Half of the books feature heroines who conform to both heart and hearth. Their lives revolve around romance, and a great deal of attention is also paid to the ways that their bedrooms are decorated and the time they spent decorating them. Four of the heroines focus on one of heart or hearth, but not both; their gender roles are mixed to some degree. Only one of the heroines does not conform to heart nor hearth.

Kinship Systems

Parental roles.

Because "Sweet Valley High" focuses on twins Jessica and Elizabeth Wakefield, one of them is the central heroine in six of the ten novels analyzed. Consequently, discussion will focus on their parents in particular. In one of these six novels the

parents are not mentioned at all. In the other five, however, the parents are discussed in some detail. Both Mr. and Mrs. Wakefield have full-time careers. Mr. Wakefield is a partner in a law firm, and Mrs. Wakefield owns an interior design firm. Both of them are mentioned in reference to their careers in each of the five books, however Mr. Wakefield's career is given more legitimacy. Mrs. Wakefield's career image is frequently contradicted. She is mentioned in relation to meal preparation and appearance more frequently than her career; the former are her central roles. She even has food prepared in the freezer for the evenings she must work late. Mrs. Wakefield's career is usually mentioned in passing, with the central subject of the statements being something else.

> Though she worked as an interior designer, her lithe, tanned figure showed that she spent as much time outdoors as possible. (23:p.29)

Her family gives her recognition not for her educational or career accomplishments (i.e. having a Master's degree), but rather for her household roles.

> Elizabeth passed her mother the knife and leaned against the sink, watching her. Alice Wakefield never seemed to run out of energy. She worked all day at her successful interior design business and then came home to run the Wakefield household as smoothly as any full-time housewife.
>
> "You're pretty special, Mom," she whispered, giving her mother a quick hug. (27:p.23)
>
> "Alice," Ned Wakefield said with an appreciative smile, "how is it you manage to put together a meal like this after a ten-hour workday?" (28:p.18)

In contrast, Mr. Wakefield's career frequently plays a role in the plot, and is central to many statements about him. Jessica and Elizabeth look at their father's job with pride, but their mother's

job with annoyance. Mr. Wakefield is mentioned once in relation to a household task, making a salad, but his "successful legal practice" (24:p.9) is mentioned in the same breath, almost to prove his masculinity while doing this feminine task. At one point Mrs. Wakefield refers to her husband sharing in the task of meal preparation, but this is only mentioned in one of the ten books analyzed.

Parental goals and expectations for their children.

Nine of the ten books do not mention the parents as having any particular goals or expectations for their children. In one book the hero's father, having recently been promoted to President of his company, wants his son to try to fit in at the new private school which all of the executives' children attend.

Roles of children in the home (see table 3.1).

Only one of the heroes is mentioned in relation to the performance of any household task. In this case he and the heroine set the table for dinner at her family's home. Most of the heroines are not mentioned in relation to any household tasks either (n=6). Four of the heroines do perform household tasks, traditional in nature, such as meal preparation or setting the table; the heroines are the ones to perform these tasks even when a male sibling is present.

Familial social status (see tables 3.2a and 3.2b).

The Wakefield's are an upper-middle-class family; one of the twins is the central heroine in most of the stories (n=6). The heroines in the remaining four books come from families that are

upper-class, middle-class, and working-class; familial social status is unknown in one of these cases. In four of the books the social status of the hero's family is unknown. Three of the heroes come from middle-class families, one from an upper-middle-class family, one from an upper-class family, and one from a working-class family. In the stories in which the familial social status is known for both characters (n=6), the heroine's family is of a higher status in three, the hero's family is of a higher status in two, and familial status is equal in one.

Number and ages of siblings/ family size (see table 3.3).

In the stories featuring one of the Wakefield twins as the heroine (n=6), there are five members of her family--her parents, twin sister, and an older brother, college-aged. In the four remaining books one of the heroines is an only child, while the presence of siblings is unclear for the other three. Two of the heroes have siblings, one with younger twin sisters (family size=5), and the other with a younger brother (family size=4). Four of the heroes are the family's only child, and the presence of siblings is unclear in the four remaining novels.

Are there any role model women for the heroine (see table 3.4)?

In only one book does the heroine have any clear role models. In the beginning she perceives her mother and her art instructor as negative role models, who lost their husbands because of the women's focus on careers. She then realizes that they really are positive role models, women who enjoyed their careers and who were not going to give them up for any man.

Subjective Identities

Principle goals and aspirations of the hero and heroine.

The goals of the heroine vary. In three of the books the heroine's goal of becoming a writer is made clear. In three of the books the heroine also has a goal of gaining the interest of a boy (any boy) or the hero. The other goals expressed by the heroines include learning to surf, gaining her family's attention, setting up a romance for someone else, and becoming a fashion designer. A career goal is mentioned in four books, romance in four, athletics in one, and family in one.

In three of the books the hero's main goal is gaining the heroine's interest. Other goals include making the school surfing team, becoming a doctor, going to college, becoming a photographer, and being accepted at his new private school. A career goal is mentioned in two books, education in two, romance in three, and popularity in two.

Degree of romantic experience (see tables 4.1a and 4.1b).

The majority of the heroines have limited (n=4) or no (n=2) romantic experience. In three of the books the heroine has extensive experience, and in one book her experience is unknown. The heroine's degree of experience is known much more often than is the hero's. In the majority of books (n=6), the hero's experience is unknown. Three of the heroes have limited experience, and one has extensive experience.

In the books in which romantic experience is known for both characters (n=4), the hero has more experience in two. The heroine

has more experience in one book, and both characters have limited experience in one book.

Does the hero or heroine have a job outside of school (see table 4.2)?

None of the heroines in "Sweet Valley High" have jobs outside of school. The situation of the heroes is similar. Eight of them do not have jobs, and the one who does has it in order for his family to be able to pay the rent. In one of the books it is not clear whether or not the hero has a job outside of school.

Is the heroine's rebellion against male authority childish (see table 4.3)?

In most of the novels (n=9), there is no effort made on the part of the heroine to rebel against male authority. The one heroine who does rebel does so effectively and with strength. When her and the hero's extracurricular activities conflict with their time together, he insists that she drop her activities so she can watch him in his. The heroine immediately refuses, tells him why he is wrong, and eventually, he comes to realize that she is right.

Does the heroine sacrifice part of herself at the end of the story (see table 4.4)?

None of the heroines sacrifice any part of themselves in the end of the story.

Nature of the romantic conflict (see table 4.5).

The nature of the conflicts in these novels varies, with a different conflict evident in almost every book. The conflicts include the hero being interested in someone else (n=2), mutual

misunderstandings, the hero leaving town, the hero thinking the heroine has become too dependent on him, the heroine not realizing the hero's interest, a disagreement over another couple's problems, the heroine thinking the hero has become "stuck-up", and the heroine being unable to decide between two boys. In one of the books there is no romantic conflict--the heroine dies. The conflict is mutual in two books, is the result of the hero's perceptions in three books, and is the result of the heroine's perceptions in three books.

Territory

Whose territory does the story take place in, the hero or the heroine's (see table 5.1)?

In nine of the stories the territory is mutual; both characters have lived in the town of Sweet Valley for most, if not all, of their lives. In one of the books the territory is that of the heroine--the hero is new in town.

Sexuality

To what extent is sexuality addressed in the story?

Although the behaviours of the characters generally stop at kissing, these behaviours occur in every novel, and the associated feelings and perceptions play a large role. Sexuality is a part of the characters' daily lives. Sexuality is a part of both description and perception.

> His voice sounded just the way Jessica had imagined--cool, sulky, and sexy. (29:p.29)
>
> The total effect was both exotic and sexy. (26:p.34)
>
> He smiled his sexy smile again. (24:p.24)

The girls of Sweet Valley try to look sexy, and recognize it in the appearance of others.

> With her hair shimmering loose about her shoulders, she looked much more seductive. (21:p.64)

> "Now there's a class-A bod," Lila said, admiring the back of the lean, tall boy dressed in a blue running suit.
> "You can't even see his face from here," Jessica pointed out. "But I can see even in those baggy sweats that everything's in the right place." (22:p.60)

> "Just put on the sexiest outfit you own. Nature will take care of the rest." (23:p.51)

Behaviors are described quite extensively and in erotic terms.

> Cara brightened. Putting down her punch, she snaked her arms around his neck. Swaying her hips gently as she moved to the rhythm of the music, she pressed in close against Steven. (23:p.109)

> Leaning against the machine he looked into her eyes with undisguised desire. (22:p.73)

> He was in the midst of rubbing suntan lotion on Elizabeth's back. He paused to kiss the nape of her neck as he lifted her hair. (21:p.30)

> "Jessica who?" he murmured as he eased her back onto the sand and covered her mouth with his. (21:p.100)

The feelings associated with the behaviours are described primarily in physical rather than in emotional or romantic terms.

> He drew her closer, kissing her with a passionate tenderness that made her feel as if the sky had shaken loose and the ground had been snatched out from under her. She started to feel dizzy again. There was a strange humming in her ears. (21:p.100)

> [Jessica's] mind [was] on the delectable way Dennis's kisses set her neck on fire. (22:p.77)

Sexual innuendos and teasing also play a role. For example, the heroine in one of the stories says to the hero after his soccer practice:

> "Hey! Do you think I could come in too?" She nodded toward the locker room door. (27:p.69)

The behaviours are not restricted to steady relationships. They occur on first dates, prior to actually dating, and even between characters who have just met. Nor are the behaviours restricted to the hero-heroine relationship; they also occur between heroes and pseudo-heroines, as well as heroines and pseudo-heroes.

Although an approval of sexuality in general is expressed, there is a limit for which there is an approval of behaviours.

> It hadn't taken them long to dispense with the formalities and take up where they'd left off in Dennis's father's office. His kisses were as satisfying as Jessica could want, and he was eager to please her though enough of a gentleman to realize when their passions were reaching the point beyond which they would no longer be able to control themselves. (22:p.78)

In another book the heroine and her sister criticize a girl who is known to be "easy". Sexuality is a fundamental part of the characters' lives in "Sweet Valley High", however, there are limits beyond which behaviour is no longer acceptable.

Summary

"Sweet Valley High" is characterized by traditionality in terms of gender roles and attitudes, and the overall nature of the romantic relationships. The focus of the female characters' lives is clearly "heart and hearth", with little attention paid to education, careers, or their lives independent of males. Conservatism, however, is certainly not characteristic of the content. Sexuality is a central component of the content of the novels. Although the characters do not have intercourse, sexuality is a natural part of their behaviours, attitudes, feelings, and

perceptions.

Adult Series Romances

Finally, the content analysis results of the adult series romance novels analyzed will be presented. The novels include those from the "Silhouette Desire" and "Harlequin Presents" lines, the two most popular lines on the market.

Culturally Available Symbols

Is feminism portrayed within traditional institutions and relationships (see table 1.1)?

There is an effort to portray feminism in six of the ten adult series romances analyzed. Of those six books, four of them portray it within traditional institutions and relationships. For example, the heroine in one story is a woman seeking independence and accomplishment in her career. Her achievement, however, is a result of anything but her own skills. When she gets herself into a professional bind, her male coworkers save her and smooth the way. She is angry when she thinks praise is awarded because of her personal relationship with the boss, yet she uses her personal relationship with him for her convenience professionally--she is also angry when she does not get assigned to a task she wanted, because she thinks the boss should give her special consideration because of her relationship with him, despite her lack of experience. Thus, while the heroine is extremely dedicated to her career, her attempts at advancement are made through her personal relationship with the boss and traditional relations with men.

In another book, the story is about a heroine who is

determined to go out and get what she wants, but this is done within the marital relationship. She is married to a man who does not love her, so her goal is to make him fall in love with her; this is what she devotes her time, skills, and determination to.

Are the heroine's nontraditional characteristics shown primarily through her actions or through narrative assertions (see table 1.2)?

There is an approximately equal distribution between heroines whose nontraditional traits are shown primarily through actions (n=5), and those whose nontraditional traits are shown primarily through narrative assertions (n=4). The heroine in one book has no nontraditional characteristics. An example of an actively nontraditional heroine is seen in one book in which she does precisely what she wants and what she thinks is right, regardless of the hero's ideas--she either ignores or explains away his protests.

Four of the heroines have nontraditional characteristics shown primarily through narrative assertions.

> Even though this was Morocco, they were living in the twentieth century and she was a modern, emancipated woman. (30:p.86)

> [She] tried not to depend on the kindness of anybody--and privately considered herself to be rather tough. (33:p.9)

Are the feminist relationships, institutions, and issues contradicted by the action depicted in the story (see table 1.3)?

Although all of the books contain some feminist elements, these elements are usually contradicted by the action in the story (n=8). Several examples illustrate this. In one book the heroine

speaks of independence, but her actions portray a childish, irresponsible woman who thinks she deserves special treatment and uses her femininity as a manipulative tool. The heroine in another book is a "modern, independent" woman who has always had complete control over the men in her life, but when the hero enters her life he "demands", "hauls", and "threatens", leaving her out-of-control and vulnerable, to her own admission.

> If she'd learned anything about him in the last three weeks, it was that any attempt on her part to dominate meant losing. (34:p.154)

The clearest example of contradiction is seen in a book in which the heroine, who has a five-week old daughter, and whose husband has left her, is now moving to another city to become independent and start a new life with her baby. Her actions, however, make it perfectly clear that she is completely and utterly helpless in all non-maternal respects, and that she could never make it on her own; she is a stereotypically traditional woman. Fortunately, she meets the hero on her way to the new city, and he immediately takes control of everything.

Are the traditional characteristics contradicted by the narrative assertions or the heroine's actions (see table 1.4)?

Traditional characteristics are evident in all of the books analyzed. In many cases (n=6) these traditional characteristics are immediately contradicted, usually by an assertion on the part of the heroine. For example, one of the heroines begins to worry that she "was acting as though he had only to beckon and she would fall at his feet" (30: p.21).

When the heroine in another novel develops a relationship with

the hero, she begins to display very foolish behaviour--she is unable even to carry on a coherent conversation. This causes her to remark:

> This behaviour was completely out of character. She'd always been immune to this kind of foolishness. (33:p.71)

Normative Concepts

Character's attitudes toward gender roles (see table 2.1).

The heroines in these books hold fairly egalitarian attitudes toward gender roles. Two of the heroines express mixed attitudes, while only one expresses traditional attitudes.

> "You're a man," she cried in frustration. "Men aren't usually insightful, or sensitive when it comes to feelings." (37:p.79)

The heroes in adult series romances, although expressing increasingly egalitarian or mixed attitudes (n=4, n=2), remain far more traditional in outlook than do the heroes. Four of the heroes, compared to only one of the heroines, express traditional attitudes.

> His own brothers would listen to than woman and be impartial. They were the New Men who did housework and changed babies and all that stuff. (39:p.34)

Another of the heroes refers to men as not having any self-control regarding sex. It is up to the woman to not entice the man. Although only one of the heroes makes these statements explicitly, the same general theme is evident in most of the books.

Relative strength/weakness of the hero and heroine (see table 2.2).

The hero is stronger than the heroine in the majority of books analyzed (n=7). Even in stories in which the heroine is

initially very strong, once a relationship with the hero develops, she loses her power to him. The heroine frequently becomes disoriented and increasingly unsure of herself, so that the hero must make the decisions. It is typical for the hero's power to extend to power over the heroine sexually. He decides if, when, and how they are to have sex, and the heroine is powerless to resist. The heroine is stronger in two cases, and the characters have equal strength in only one of the books analyzed.

Does the hero conform to the traditional male gender role--No Sissy Stuff, the Big Wheel, the Sturdy Oak, and Give 'em Hell (see table 2.3)?

The traditional male role, as defined by David and Brannon (1976), is closely conformed to by the heroes in the novels (n=8). The heroine often refers to the hero in terms of his "masculinity" (30:p.32), "strength" (32:p.92), "vitality" (32:p.92), and "sexual magnetism" (32:p.92). One of the heroes rides bucking broncos for fun in his spare time. The typical hero is well-illustrated in one of the stories (39):

1. No Sissy Stuff--The hero holds very traditional attitudes toward gender roles, perceiving very different roles for men and women. He refers to the "New Men" as being in the "Twilight Zone of gender", and thinks that women "ought to stay home" (p.34

2. The Big Wheel--Not only do all of his ranch-hands look up to him and take his word as law, but so do all of the men living in the region.

3. The Sturdy Oak--After his parents died when he was

nineteen, he raised his six younger siblings on his own. The hero tries to take control and give the orders wherever he is. He calmly and effortlessly rescues the heroine when her life in endangered and she is weak and in tears.

4. Give 'em Hell--He threatens any men who flirt with the heroine that they will have to deal with him. When riding across the far reaches of his land, he carries a gun in case of trespassers or fugitives hiding on his land.

Eight of the heroes conform to the traditional male role in all four respects. The remaining two heroes conform to three and two elements of the definition, respectively.

Does the heroine conform to the traditional female role of heart and hearth (see table 2.4)?

The distinctions among the heroines in terms of their conformity to the traditional female role are not as clear-cut as the distinctions among the heroes. Five of the heroines appear to hold a mixed gender role, at times conforming to heart and hearth and at other times not. Two of the heroines do not conform to heart nor hearth. The remaining three heroines explicitly conform to both heart and hearth. For example:

> All I wanted...all I wanted was to be a good wife. I didn't want personal recognition. I didn't want a career....All I wanted was to keep house, to be a good wife and mother. (37:p.128)

Kinship Systems

Parental roles.

Parents are absent from the lives of the majority of the heroes and heroines, for one reason or another. Both parents of four of the heroines and five of the heroes are deceased. One of

the heroes and one of the heroines have one parent deceased. In addition, one of the heroes does not know who his father is. In one case for both the hero and heroine, the parents are not mentioned at all.

One or both parents are present in the story for only three of the heroines and two of the heroes. In the other cases the parents are briefly mentioned, but not actually present in the plot. The primary role played by the parents is that of providing an explanation for the hero's or the heroine's behavior and/or attitudes. For example, the father of one of the heroines, having died ten years earlier, was a workaholic who ignored his wife and family, and died of a heart attack due to his lifetime of accumulated work-related stress. The heroines mother had no identity of her own; it was consumed by her husband's. This combination of factors resulted in the heroine's fear of becoming like her mother and her refusal to get involved with the hero, who is also a workaholic.

In one of the stories, the hero's parents died fifteen years earlier, when he was only nineteen, leaving him with the task of raising his six younger siblings; this task lasted until he was thirty-two years old. This aspect of his life led the hero to never want to marry, and to his fear of committing to the heroine --he thinks he has already dealt with all of the family responsibilities anyone should have to in a lifetime.

Familial social status while growing up (see tables 3.2a and 3.2b).

Four of the heroes grew up in upper-class families. One grew up middle-class, one was lower-middle-class, and two were working-class. The familial social status is unknown for two of the heroes. In comparison, only two of the heroines grew up in upper-class families. One was middle-class, two were lower-middle-class, and one was working-class. Familial social status is unknown for four of the heroines. Thus, family background is known more often for the hero than for the heroine.

When familial social status is known for both the hero and heroine (n=6), the hero's family was usually of a higher status (n=3). The status of the heroine's family was higher in two cases, and status was equal in one case.

Are/were there any role model women for the heroine during her lifetime (see table 3.4)?

Only one of the heroines has had an explicit role model during her lifetime, and this was a negative role model--her mother. According to the heroine, her mother lacked any identity of her own; it was contained within her workaholic husband's identity. When he died, she experienced a long period of profound loss and confusion because she lacked any interests independent of him. Having a mother as a negative role model may have had a positive impact on the heroine's life, however. As a result of seeing her mother's experiences, the heroine vows to avoid being like her, and develops and keeps her own interests and a very strong identity.

Does the hero or heroine have any children (see table 3.5)?

Only one of the characters has any children. One of the heroines has a five-week old daughter. Although virtually incapable in most areas of her life, the heroine is a wonderful mother and fulfills her maternal role with skill. None of the heroes have any children, but one did have to raise his six younger siblings when his parents died. As a result of the tremendous responsibilities placed upon him at such a young age, he now, at the age of thirty-two, wants no responsibilities in the way of a wife or children.

Marital status (see table 3.6).

The majority of characters are single--seven of the heroes and eight of the heroines. Two of the heroes and one of the heroines are divorced, and in one case the hero and heroine are married to each other at the beginning of the story. In the stories in which one of the characters is divorced, the other character is single.

Is a desire for marriage and/or children expressed by the hero or heroine (see table 3.7)?

Half of the heroes express no desire for marriage nor children (n=5). Two of the heroes express a desire for marriage, one for a child, and two for both marriage and children. The situation is similar for the heroines of the novels. Four do not express a desire for marriage nor children. Four want both marriage and children and two express a desire for marriage but not children. In only two of the books is the desire shared by both the hero and heroine. When desires for marriage and children

are expressed, the heroine usually expresses them earlier in the story than the hero does.

Presence of siblings/family size (see table 3.3).

Half of the heroes have siblings or stepsiblings; in all cases the siblings are younger. The size of the families varies. In three of the stories the hero has only one sibling, while in two of the books he has "several" (six in one case). The hero is an only child in three of the books, and in two of the books it is not known whether he has any brothers or sisters.

Most of the novels feature heroines who are only children (n=6). Only one of the heroines is known to have a sibling, a younger brother. In the remaining three cases it is not known whether the heroine has any siblings.

Subjective Identities

Age (see table 4.6).

The hero is older than the heroine in all ten cases. Eight of the heroines are in their late 20s, one is in her early 20s, and one is in her early 30s. In comparison, most of the heroes are in their 30s. Two are in their early 30s, five are in their late 30s, and one is in his 40s. The specific age of two of the heroes is unknown, but they are described as being "older" than the heroine.

Current social status (see tables 4.7a and 4.7b).

All of the heroes are of a high social status, nine upper-class and one upper-middle-class. The social status of the heroines varies more. Three are upper-class, three are

upper-middle-class, two are middle-class, and two are lower-middle-class.

The hero is usually of a higher social status than the heroine (n=7). In two of the novels the characters are of an equal social status, while the heroine is of a higher status in one book.

Occupation.

The occupations of all ten heroes and heroines are known in some detail. The heroes' occupations include owner and president of his family's export business, newspaper editor, owner of his family's private art collection, playwright and mystery novelist, owner and president of a computer engineering firm, owner of a farm and ranch management consulting firm, business consultant, owner of a large ranch (n=2), and internationally renowned zoologist.

The heroines' occupations include schoolteacher, new feature journalist (used to be a successful freelance photographer), assistant professor of art (also writing a book on art), stage lighting designer assistant, hypnotherapist, manager of family's Arabian horse breeding business, owner of a coffee emporium, legal secretary, manager of her aunt's inn, and flute instructor at the best music school in the country (also writing a book about the flute).

Two of the heroines have stereotypically female jobs, schoolteacher and legal secretary. In both of these cases the heroines are neither committed to nor enjoy their jobs. The

heroines in the other eight novels are very committed to their jobs; their careers, in fact, form a central part of their identities.

Principle goals/aspirations of the hero and heroine.

Most of the heroines (n=6) have explicit career goals--to be successful in their chosen fields. Four of the heroines also express family-related goals, usually in the form of helping a family member in some way. In three of the novels the heroine wants to get the hero to fall in love with and commit to her, while in one of the novels the heroine wants to avoid a relationship with the hero. In one case the heroine's goal is very general and unfocused--she wants to be free from people who depend on her.

In contrast, only three of the heroes express explicit career goals. Perhaps this is because they are already well-established in their careers and are considered at the top of their fields. None of the heroes have family-related goals. Like the heroines, three of the heroes want a relationship with the heroine, and one wants to avoid a relationship with her. Two of the heroes want to get the heroine into bed, a goal not shared by any of the heroines. In one case, the hero's primary goal is revenge on the heroine's family, and in another case the hero's goals are unclear.

Level of education (see table 4.8).

The majority of stories feature heroines who are college-educated (n=7). Three have a Bachelor's degree, one has a

Master's degree, and three have a PhD. One of the heroines has only a high school diploma; she also happens to have a traditional career (legal secretary), and is uncommitted to it. In fact, this heroine will only work as long as she must, that is, until she finds a husband. The educational attainment of two of the heroines is unknown.

The level of education attained is known for only five of the heroes, only two of whom have attended college (one with a Bachelor's degree and one with a PhD). Three of the heroes have no formal post-secondary education. Unlike the parallel heroine, however, their lack of education is not reflected in their life choices or careers. These men are self-taught--one, in fact, runs a computer engineering firm, while another, who had to put his six younger siblings through college, read all of their textbooks to be sure that they were doing their studies.

Is the heroine's rebellion against male authority childish (see table 4.3)?

All but one of the heroines rebel against male authority. Their rebellion, however, is often childish and ineffectual (n=5). The heroines are frequently "infuriated" or "overcome with rage", but their protests resemble a child's temper tantrum. For example, one of the heroines turns every professional criticism into a personal attack, has tantrums, storms out of the room, and does the opposite of what the hero, her boss, tells her to do; he then ends up apologizing to her when she bursts into tears. Four of the heroines rebel in justified, firm, and effective ways, at least most of the time.

Is the relationship entered into freely or reluctantly on the part of the hero and heroine (see table 4.9)?

The heroine usually enters into her relationship with the hero with substantial reluctance (n=8), either because of the type of man he is or because of their business relationship. Only two of the heroines enter into the relationship freely. In contrast, most of the heroes enter the relationship freely, and must persuade the heroine to enter it as well (n=7). Only three of the heroes enter the relationship reluctantly, usually because of a desire to avoid commitment or responsibility.

Does the heroine sacrifice part of herself in the end (see table 4.4)?

Only two of the heroines sacrifice a part of themselves in the end of the story. In one case the hero torments, teases, and insults the heroine throughout the story, but at the very end, when he professes his love for her, she falls at his feet, without a second thought as to the history of their relationship.

In another story, the heroine sacrifices the control and power she had throughout most of the story. During the course of the story she is able to keep the hero on his toes, always guessing what she would do next. She did whatever she wanted, regardless of the hero's wishes. However, once their sexual relationship begins, she loses all of that control and instead becomes one a stereotypically compliant women, something he repeatedly refers to.

> He said, "I'd like to put you right down here on the floor and show you how to pay your rent, but I haven't time right now. Behave until I can take control of you again. Here me?" (39:p.110).

Nature of the romantic conflict (see table 4.5).

In half of the stories (n=5), romantic conflicts arise because of the heroine's perception of a lack of commitment on the part of the hero. Three of the heroines fear that a relationship with the hero will cause a loss of identity and independence. One story has a heroine who distrusts the hero, while one story has a hero who distrusts the heroine. It is interesting to note that in nine of the ten novels, romantic conflicts are the result of the heroine's perceptions.

Nature of the ending of the story.

Marriage is the explicit or implicit ending in all ten of the books. The hero proposes at the end of four of stories, they get married at the end of two of the stories, and one of the stories ends with the wedding. One of the novels ends with their marriage and the birth of a child three years later. Engagement or marriage is not explicitly mentioned at the end of one of the novels, but there is the implicit knowledge that they will occur. In one of the books the couple is already married; the story ends with the hero professing his love to the heroine.

Is there a basic mistrust of the opposite sex (see table 4.10)?

Three of the heroes and four of the heroines have a basic mistrust of the opposite sex. This is caused by either (a) childhood family experiences (e.g. abandonment by a parent), or (b) past experiences with the opposite sex.

Who initiates the relationship (see table 4.11)?

The hero initiates the relationship in seven of the ten books analyzed, while the heroine initiates it in only one book. Mutual initiation is found in one story, and initiation by a third party is found in another.

Nature of the initial relationship.

Most frequently, the nature of the initial relationship is business (n=4). For example, in one story the hero is a newspaper editor and the heroine is a new feature journalist, while in another story the heroine hires the hero as a business consultant for her coffee emporium. A legal dispute forms the basis of the initial relationship in one of the books. In other cases the initial relationships are based on pure sexual attraction, fate (being stranded together in a blizzard), and in one case, an arranged marriage.

In two of the books there are differing perceptions on the part of the hero and heroine as to the nature of the initial relationship. In one case the heroine's perception is that of business--she wants to take him on as a client. Meanwhile, the hero's intentions are purely sexual. In the other case the characters are already married. She married for love, but he married because it was a good, business-like match.

Who resolves the conflict at the end of the story (see table 4.12)?

The hero is usually the one to resolve the conflict (n=7), by overcoming the heroine's reservations or showing her the error in

her perceptions. There is mutual resolution in two of the stories. The heroine resolves the conflict in only one of the stories, by persuading the hero of his love for her.

Degree of romantic experience (see tables 4.1a and 4.1b).

The heroes of adult series romance novels generally have a great deal of (i.e. "extensive") experience (n=7). Only one of the heroes has limited experience, the result of dedication to establishing his career. The extent of experience of two of the heroes is unclear. Most of the heroines, on the other hand, lack experience. Seven have limited experience, and one is completely inexperienced. Only one heroine has extensive experience--she "collects" marriage proposals. The extent of experience is unclear for one of the heroines.

When the degree of experience is known for both characters (n=8), the hero usually has more experience (n=6). In one case they both have limited experience, and in one case they both have extensive experience. None of the heroines are more romantically experienced than the heroes.

Territory

Whose territory does the story take place in, the hero's or the heroine's (see table 5.1)?

Half of the stories (n=5) take place in the hero's territory. In three of these cases, in fact, the setting is the hero's home. For example, in one story the heroine, who is from London, visits her long-estranged aunt (the hero's stepmother) in Morocco. The story takes place on the hero's large family estate. The

heroine's territory is the setting for two of the stories, one which takes place at the inn the heroine manages, and the other at the store the heroine owns. In one case the territory is mutual; the characters are already married and are living in their new home. The other two stories take place in territory that is foreign to both of them--stranded in a blizzard while traveling, and at a new job site.

Sexuality

To what extent is sexuality addressed in the story?

Sexuality is similarly addressed in all of the novels. Rarely does a page go by without some sexual reference. Even appearance and physical features are described in sexual terms, from the point of first meeting (i.e. sexuality is a large part of perception).

> The man had an overabundance of sex appeal. (30:p.18)

> Her tough-looking attire and her capable hands had belied the softness that he was sure was hiding under that sweatshirt. (36:p.15).

Behaviour progresses to intercourse in all of the books, and as the decade wore on it often progressed to oral sex as well. Each story has several sexual encounters, although they do not always progress to intercourse. Each encounter is described in great detail, usually several pages in length. Even the first kiss is described in detailed, sexual terms.

> He lowered his lips to her and kissed her demandingly as she fought the whirling in her head, kissed her until her lips responded to his. As she surrendered to the black velvet of his kiss, she was aware of nothing but him and the sensations he caused. His hands moved up and down her back and hips, pressing her to him, molding her body to his. Carefully and expertly, he aroused her sleeping desires,

> desires she never knew existed. Fire ran through her veins, leaving her with no control over her body. All she could do was cling weakly and helplessly to him while she hoped his kisses would never stop. (30:pp.51-52)

A frequent phenomenon with respect to sexuality is the role it plays in creating differential power in the relationship. Sexual encounters typically leave the heroine helpless and incapable of even the simplest tasks. She must "cling" to the hero in her weakness, relying on his strength. Even though the hero is also wild with passion, unable to control himself, he always remains in control of both the heroine and the situation. The sexual power of the hero is often used as a manipulative tool to persuade the heroine to do what he wants her to do.

Another phenomenon, made explicit in one of the stories, relates to sexual attraction being fused with anger. The anger the hero shows with the heroine is greater than the people around him have ever seen, yet he cannot stop thinking about how sexy she looks. Often, when the heroes experience anger, they use sex to punish the heroine, not in the explicit sense of rape, but rather in taking away the heroine's dignity by proving to her that she is powerless to resist his charms, more of a "psychological rape".

The hero is driven wild with passion for the heroine. It keeps him awake at night, and haunts his dreams. He finds her so attractive that he simply cannot control himself. She must impose the control on him. When the hero does put effort into restraining himself, it is supposed to be taken as a "favour" to her and a sign of his affection and character; this implies that if he did not have such a strong character, and if he did not care about her so much, he would not make any effort at restraint.

Most of the heroines perceive a link between sex and commitment, a link made explicit in one of the stories. After having had sex for the first time, the heroine assumes that marriage is a natural result, proposing to the hero and making wedding plans on the spot, leaving the hero in a state of confusion (after all, they had only known each other for two weeks).

Is contraception or safe sex addressed (see table 6.1)?

Contraception plays a role in half of the novels (n=5), usually in the form of a condom. The issue of contraception began to be addressed in the early 1980s. There was, however, no discussion of the issue between the characters at that time. The last book analyzed, a 1991 volume, has the issue as a larger part of experience. A condom is used during each sexual encounter, and is made a part of the entire sexual experience between the hero and heroine.

The issue is always one of contraception, however, rather than safe sex. Once the commitment is made between the characters, and preventing pregnancy is no longer a concern, contraceptive use ceases.

Does the heroine become pregnant at the end of the story (see table 6.2)?

Only one of the heroines becomes pregnant at the end of the story, and that is after the characters are married. This woman is also the only character to have already had a child when the story began. Her maternal role was a central element that drew the hero's attention to her.

In three of the other stories, although the heroine does not become pregnant, the hero's recognition of her potential maternity plays a large role in his commitment to her. One of the heroes refers to "making" the heroine pregnant and "giving" her a child. Another expresses similar sentiments.

> When he had seen how pregnant Diane Greeley was on Friday night, all Garrett had been able to think about was what Katy would look like carrying his child. He had spent most of the evening envisioning her all soft and round with his baby. (34:p.185)

Who controls most of their sexual encounters (see table 6.3)?

In most instances the hero both initiates and controls the couple's sexual encounters, although the heroine is an eager participant (n=6). In two of the novels the control is generally mutual, although the hero exhibits slightly more control than the heroine. Two of the heroines control their sexual encounters, but even in these cases there are times when she needs the hero's more experienced guidance.

Summary

Feminism is largely addressed by the content of adult series romances, moreso than in any of the other categories analyzed. Issues of independence, equality, nontraditionality, and life independent of men characterize the lives of the heroines; education and careers are their central focus. Underlying these issues of feminism, however, are messages of traditionality. Finding her "soulmate" suddenly makes the heroine's life complete, and she did not even realize anything was missing. Sexuality is portrayed extensively, comprising a very large component of the romantic relationship.

The results of the content analysis of each of the four lines have now been presented. In the next chapter the lines will be compared to each other in an attempt to answer the question of how adolescent girls' reading habits may have changed and why. The central issue appears to be that of sexuality.

CHAPTER 5

SEXUALITY, DIVORCE, AND ROMANCE READING

The link between popular culture and society is well established and accepted by both critics and supporters of popular culture. The particular nature of this link, however, is not definitive. Popular culture may reflect some social characteristics while distorting others, or may completely deny or ignore certain social characteristics. The way in which popular culture portrays the social world determines what effects popular culture may have on the social world, if any. Popular culture may support the status quo, or it may voice opposition to the status quo, thereby motivating social change (Janowitz, 1968). Whatever the particular nature of the popular culture-society link may be in given circumstances, it is clear that a bidirectional relationship does exist. That is, popular culture may have effects on the social world, and the changing social world may have effects on the content of popular culture (Albrecht, 1954). It is through examining content and comparing it to historical circumstances that the specific relationship between a particular popular cultural form and its cultural context is discovered. Thus, it is by comparing the results of the content analysis of the four categories of romance novels to adolescent culture of the 1980s that the question of the failure of the adolescent series romance novel may be answered.

If the content analysis results of each of the categories of novels examined are compared, there are two dimensions in which

substantial differences exist between the failed teen series romances and the remaining categories--"culturally available symbols" and "sexuality". The failed novels are characterized by the absence of efforts to portray feminism to any extent. For three of the four questions in "culturally available symbols", the majority of failed novels analyzed do not apply (see tables 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3). In this dimension, however, although the failed romances do substantially differ from both "Sweet Dreams" and adult series romance novels, they do not differ from "Sweet Valley High" novels, which are also characterized by the absence of portrayals of feminism, yet remain extremely popular. Thus, the issue of gender is not likely central in any reading changes that have occurred.

The differences in the dimension of sexuality appear to be the central issues of concern, particularly when the social conditions of the 1980s are considered. The particular social issues of consequence are the rising prominence of sexuality in the lives of teenagers, and their increased experience of family breakup due to divorce, along with its consequences.

In this chapter, the role of sexuality and its rising prominence in the lives of contemporary adolescents will first be examined and related to the content of romance novels. The experience of parental divorce and its effects on adolescent girls will then be discussed. Finally, the changed social conditions in relation to sexuality and divorce for adolescent girls of the 1980s will be related to changes in their romantic reading behaviour.

The nature of these changes is proposed to be a move away from adolescent series romance novels and toward adolescent soap opera series romance novels (particularly "Sweet Valley High") and adult series romances.

Adolescent Sexuality

Although there is some variance in the actual statistics provided on the sexual behaviour of adolescents (due to methodological, geographical, and developmental differences), there is a clear indication of a general upward trend in the numbers of adolescents engaging in sexual behaviour, and a downward trend in the ages of these adolescents.

Intercourse

Katchadourian (1989) summarizes the results of several studies from different time periods on the percentage of adolescents who have engaged in sexual intercourse. Kinsey, in 1953, found that 39% of boys and only 3% of girls aged 15 had engaged in intercourse. That proportion rose significantly, at least for girls, by 1973. At that time Sorensen found that the proportion had risen to 44% of boys and 30% of girls ages 13 to 15. Similar percentages were found in 1979 by Haas, and in 1985 by Coles and Stokes, with 16-year-olds.

Zelnick and Kantner (cited in Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1986) examined changes in sexual behaviour of adolescent girls during the 1970s, comparing the proportion of girls ages 15 to 19, both in 1971 and 1979, who had engaged in intercourse at least once. The data obtained by these researchers are indicative of

substantial changes occurring during this eight-year period at all age levels. The proportion of girls aged 15 who had experienced intercourse rose from 14% to almost 25%. Those aged 16 experienced an increase from 21% to 38%. Similar changes occurred among adolescent girls ages 17, 18, and 19 as well, with the greatest change occurring among 17-year-olds. In 1971 approximately one-quarter of girls aged 17 had experienced sexual intercourse; by 1979 that proportion had doubled so that one-half of 17-year-old girls had engaged in intercourse. Approximately 70% of 19-year-olds had experienced intercourse in 1979, an increase of 23% from 1971.

A publication package about adolescent sexuality distributed to Alberta physicians in 1991 by the Alberta Medical Association contains much more current information about Canadian adolescents. It reports that 25% of teens in grade nine (i.e. about the age of 14) had already experienced intercourse. Of this proportion, one-quarter responded that they had intercourse "often", and 44% responded that they had intercourse a "few times". Almost half (i.e. 47%) of teens in grade eleven (i.e. about the age of 16) had experienced intercourse, 40% of whom said they had sex "often", and 45% of whom had sex a "few times". The data reported in this study demonstrate an increase over the percentages found in 1979 by Haas (cited in Katchadourian, 1989) and Zelnick and Kantner (cited in Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1986), and in 1985 by Coles and Stokes (cited in Katchadourian, 1989).

The Alberta Medical Association also reports that 25% of

Alberta teens have had sex by the age of 14. By age 18, 66% of Alberta teens have had sex; this represents an increase from the percentage of 18-year-olds cited by Zelnick and Kantner, who found 40% had engaged in intercourse in 1971, and 57% in 1979 (cited in Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1986).

Research done by the Alan Guttmacher Institute, a family planning agency that served as the Research and Development Division of Planned Parenthood Federation of America from 1968 until 1977, found that 75% of girls have had sex by the age of 19, the majority of whom have had two or more partners (Imperiale, 1991). This proportion represents an increase since 1979, when 69% of 19-year-old girls had experienced intercourse (Zelnick & Kantner, cited in Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1986).

In a survey of over 500 students in grades 10, 11, and 12, with an average age of 16.3, Newcomer and Udry (1985) discovered that half of the boys and 37% of the girls had engaged in intercourse at least once.

Seventeen magazine conducted a survey of over 1000 adolescents (ages 15 to 19) and young adults (ages 20 and 21) in 1991 about their sexuality--behaviour, attitudes, feelings, and values (Pesmen, 1991). This research found that 51% of adolescents have had intercourse, and that for a change, the incidence was just as high among girls as among boys. Among 18 and 19-year-olds the incidence was higher--71%; this is an increase since Seventeen's 1984 survey, when it was found that 54% of 18 and 19-year-olds had engaged in intercourse.

Even those teenagers and young adults who have not had intercourse do not necessarily condemn it in their lives or the lives of others. Only 21% of girls and 15% of boys condemn premarital sex in all instances (Pesmen, 1991).

The parents of today's adolescents may hold more permissive attitudes as well. In the Seventeen survey 77% of the adolescents who were sexually active said that their parents were aware of their sexual activity. A study by Yankelovich (1981) also finds more permissive parental attitudes. In 1967, more than 80% of parents of college-age children condemned premarital sex, even if their children were "in love". By 1981, more than 50% of parents of college-age children approved of premarital sex if their children were "in love".

While the proportion of adolescents engaging in sexual intercourse has increased, there is also evidence that the average age of first intercourse has declined. The Seventeen survey reports that the average age of first intercourse has declined since 1984 to 15.8 (Pesmen, 1991). Masters, Johnson, and Kolodny (1986) report that by 1980, the age of first intercourse had declined, especially among girls. In 1971 only 14% of 15-year-old girls had engaged in intercourse, while by 1979 that number rose to 23% (Zelnick & Kantner, cited in Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1986).

The 1991 publication package distributed by the Alberta Medical Association cited data found by the Division of Vital Statistics in 1989 that also indicates a decline in the age of first intercourse. Between 1974 and 1984, livebirths among girls

ages 10 to 19 declined by 26%. When the sample was restricted to those ages 10 to 16, the decline was smaller, only 7%. When the sample was restricted even further, to those ages 10 to 14, it was found that the livebirth rate had actually increased. There are two possible explanations for this data. The first suggests that the rate of intercourse among young adolescents has remained stable but their contraceptive use has declined. This explanation is unlikely--research evidence indicates that contraceptive use has increased among adolescents, and although it has increased more among older adolescents, it has slightly increased or at least remained stable among young adolescents (Pesmen, 1991). The second explanation for the increased livebirth rate among young and pre-adolescents with a concomitant decrease among older adolescents suggests that the rate of intercourse has increased more among young and pre-adolescents, resulting in a younger average age of first intercourse.

Evidence indicates that in recent years more teens have been engaging in sexual intercourse, and at increasingly younger ages. Sexual intercourse, however, is not the whole of adolescent sexual behaviour. Thus, adolescent participation in other sexual behaviours, notable oral sex and petting, will now be examined to demonstrate the prominence of sexuality in the lives of today's teenagers.

Oral Sex

Participation in oral sex among adolescents has been investigated by Newcomer and Udry (1985). They surveyed more than

500 adolescents in grades 10, 11, and 12. Among nonvirgins, oral sex is quite prevalent--87% of girls and 82% of boys have engaged in it. Among virgins, 16% of girls and 24% of boys have participated in oral sex. In their survey in fact, oral sex was more prevalent than intercourse. Among boys, 50% have "ever had intercourse" while 53% have "ever had oral sex". Among girls, 37% have "ever had intercourse" while 42% have "ever had oral sex".

Petting

Kinsey, in 1953, researched the extent of petting among adolescents ages 15 and 18 (cited in Katchadourian, 1989). Petting was defined as including necking, light petting (i.e. above-waist), and heavy petting (i.e. below-waist). At the age of 15 it was found that 39% of girls and 57% of boys had engaged in petting. At the age of 18, 80% of both boys and girls had engaged in petting. Less than 25% petted to the point of orgasm.

More recent data on 15-year-olds reports that among girls, 67% have "necked", 46% have engaged in "light petting", and 28% have engaged in "heavy petting". Among boys, 60% have "necked", 50% have engaged in "light petting", and 39% have engaged in "heavy petting" (Katchadourian, 1989). These proportions are higher than those reported in Kinsey.

Kolodny, in 1980, found that 40% of girls and 50% of boys had petted to the point of orgasm in high school (cited in Katchadourian, 1989). This is a substantial increase over Kinsey's 1953 findings (i.e. 25%). Interviews with first-year college students about their sexual behaviour while in high school found

that 82% had engaged in heavy petting with a partner (i.e. genital stimulation). Forty percent of girls and 50% of boys had petted to the point of orgasm (Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1986).

The "Canada Youth and AIDS Study" (cited in Alberta Medical Association, 1991) examined the petting behaviour of teens in grades 9 and 11 (i.e. approximately the ages of 14 and 16). Their results show a substantial increase over Kinsey's statistics and Katchadourian's statistics (1989). Almost three-quarters of those in grade 9, and 84% of those in grade 11 have engaged in "deep kissing". Light petting has been engaged in by 78% of those in grade 9 and 81% of those in grade 11. Heavy petting has been engaged in by 57% of those in grade 9 and 74% of those in grade 11.

The research evidence summarized here indicates that adolescent sexual behaviour, in its entirety, has increased over the last few decades. It has been suggested that teenage attitudes toward sexuality have changed even more, and more rapidly than the behaviour itself (Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1986), although this discrepancy is difficult to evaluate because of the sparse research on adolescent sexual attitudes (Katchadourian, 1989). The sparse research is largely the result of adults who generally feel threatened by adolescent sexuality (Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1986). The issue of whether teens' sexual desires are legitimate is rarely addressed by either scientific research or society as a whole. As a result of what has been labelled the sexual revolution of the 1960s, premarital sex among adults has become the norm--it is still condemned, however, for adolescents, especially girls

(Willis, 1988). Government funding in the United States, or the lack thereof, has also contributed to the sparsity of research. This is explained, in part, by the "Moral Majority" or the social "New Right" influence on government and big business (Katchadourian, 1989; Weil, 1990; Christian-Smith, 1990). In the 1970s a great deal of government support was given for a wide range of studies on sexuality. In 1978 alone, the American government put 8 million dollars toward research on sexuality. In 1980, with the start of the Reagan era, support rapidly and substantially declined (Weil, 1990). Why? It has been postulated that Reagan (as well as his successor, Bush), as a Republican, responded favorably toward the ideology of the Moral Majority or social New Right (Christian-Smith, 1990). These groups were composed of social and sexual conservatives who wanted to restore traditional sexual values in place of the modern sexual values which they perceived as a threat to the family, the cornerstone of American life, and ultimately to God (Katchadourian, 1989; Klatch, 1987; Davidson, 1988). The people comprising these groups are opposed to abortion, premarital sex, sex education in the schools, homosexuality, pornography, and feminism or nontraditional gender roles. For example, in 1985, with the publication of The New Our Bodies, Ourselves, the Moral Majority publicly denounced it as "secular humanist garbage" and a threat to the family (Thurston, 1987). They support traditional roles (a hierarchy of first God, then Man, and finally Woman), sexual restraint in youth, and censorship (Katchadourian, 1989; Klatch, 1987; Davidson, 1988).

Despite the support the New Right may have received from government policy and ideology, they have not been able to roll back the major changes the women's movement and the sexual revolution have achieved in society as a whole (Katchadourian, 1989). An analysis of a succession of national surveys found that only 20% of American adults hold the sexually conservative view of the New Right; 80% hold views in favour of the freedom of choice regarding sexuality (Yankelovich, 1981).

The effects of the sexually conservative view are not widespread among adolescents either. Willis (1988) reports that upon writing a satirical newspaper article about the punishment that should exist for adolescent promiscuity, there was a tremendous outcry from teenagers and young adults. Willis received thousands of angry letters in response, both from those who thought she was serious as well as from those who recognized the satire but were angry at her making light of the issue of adolescent sexuality.

> The letter writers may have been confused about where I stood, but their anger at the authorities they thought I represented is heartening. These are young people who, despite the ongoing barrage of guilt-and-fear provoking propaganda, are defending their right to sexual love. And half of them are female. (p.179)

Thus, while academic research on sexuality may have been limited, in part, by the New Right influence, sexual experience outside the traditional bounds of marriage was something that would not disappear.

There is more to the sexuality of today's adolescents than behaviour. There are also their feelings and attitudes. Both

behaviours and attitudes have apparently gone through substantial changes in recent years, making sexuality a larger part of teenagers' lives. To summarize the Seventeen magazine survey of 1003 adolescents, Pesmen (1991) says that

> girls show a newfound confidence about dating, sex, and getting what they want from guys (or at least trying). The biggest news isn't that teenagers are having sex more in the 90s than teenagers of the past--even though you are. The real news is that you are apparently thinking about and having sex more responsibly. (p.63)

Why are increasing numbers of adolescents having sex? Why is sexuality a larger part of adolescents' lives? Part of the explanatiion lies in sexuality as a social issue. The adolescent pregnancy rate and the AIDS epidemic have highlighted the issue of sexuality as a whole and adolescent sexuality in particular. In Alberta, sex education throughout the elementary and secondary school system has become mandatory, although parents may opt to take their children out of the program. Sex education has also become an increasingly larger part of the school curriculum throughout Canada and the United States. Pesmen (1991) found that 60% of sexually active teens are concerned about getting AIDS. As a result of the worry about AIDS and pregnancy, increasing contraceptive use has characterized adolescent sexual behaviour. A larger proportion of teenagers are using contraceptives, and using them more regularly.

The central factors contributing to increased sexuality among today's adolescents are played by popular culture/media and by the changed structure and dynamics of the family due to the increased divorce rate. Each of these issues will be discussed, along with

their consequences for romantic reading behaviour, in turn.

Sexuality in Popular Culture

In the 1980s, popular culture and the media were frequently implicated in the sexualization of Western culture.

> Sex permeates US society. From pop music to prime-time television, sex fills the fantasy world of entertainment and advertising. (Bernards, 1988, p.13)
>
> "Sex oozes from every pore of the culture and there's not a kid in the world who can avoid it." (Krauthammer, cited in Bernards, 1988, p.13)
>
> The mass media are filled with romantic images of male-female relationships, and the myth prevails that "to be carried away" by one's sexual urges is a sure sign of love, which justifies sexual interaction. (Moore, 1988, p.19)

The perception of the overwhelming prevalence of sexuality in popular culture is supported by the initiation of the movement headed by Tipper Gore to censor and rate rock music albums.

Hyde (1988) reports that intercourse is portrayed on television an average of 20 000 time in one year. A study out of Michigan State University reports that the majority of both ninth and tenth grade girls watch soap operas on television, and that premarital sex is shown or discussed on soap operas an average of 1.5 times each hour (cited in Hyde, 1988).

The central role of popular culture in providing information about sexuality to adolescents is made clear in other ways as well:

1. The changing portrayal of sexuality on television during the 1980s is evident in a study by Haffner and Kelly (1988). They found that issues of contraception and adolescent sexuality, taboo in prior years, began to be addressed in 1985.

2. Adolescents are often inadvertently exposed to sexuality,

even in popular cultural forms not intended for their consumption. The U.S. Advisory Board for Social Concerns reports that 70% of all pornographic magazines end up in the hands of minors. In fact, the primary consumers of pornography are boys ages 15 to 19 (Kantzer, 1988).

3. The media is considered a primary source of sexual information by 18% of adolescents, preceded only by mothers (32%) and schools (19%) (Katchadourian, 1989).

Further support for the role of popular culture and the media in adolescent perceptions of sexuality can be found in the creation of the Center for Population Options' Media Project in 1983. The Center for Population Options is a family planning organization based in Washington, DC, founded in 1980. Its objectives are to

> reduce the incidence of unintended teenage pregnancy and childbearing and to promote adolescent health through education; to prevent the proliferation of...HIV...among adolescents; motivate teens to think and act responsibly about birth control and parenting. (Encyclopedia of Associations, 1992, p.1222)

In 1983 the Center for Population Options developed its Media Project, based in Los Angeles. It

> serves as an advisory and information resource for the entertainment industry to encourage positive and relevant messages about family planning, sexuality, and reproductive health, especially in programming directed toward adolescents. (Encyclopedia of Associations, 1992, p.1222)

Sexuality clearly became a larger part of the lives of adolescents during the 1980s, as indicated by the changes that have occurred in their sexual attitudes and behaviour. The increased sexuality of adolescents is part-and-parcel of the increased

sexuality of Western society as a whole. Concern over sexuality as a social issue and the prevalence of sexual issues in popular culture and the mass media contribute to the role of sexuality in the adolescent subculture. What consequences might this have for the popular culture consumption of girls in relation to romance novels, and the changed composition of the adolescent series romance market? The next section deals with these issues and attempts to answer the questions.

Sexuality--Content Analysis

Adolescent series romances of the very early 1980s are characterized by a lack of overt sexuality. As the decade wore on, with the increasingly larger role played by sexuality in adolescent girls' lives and in Western culture, issues of sexuality began to have an impact on the series romance market, both at the adult and adolescent levels. Before directly comparing the sexual components of the failed lines, "Sweet Dreams", "Sweet Valley High", and the adult lines, the path toward sexuality in the adult market will be briefly described. The history of the sexual content of adolescent romance novels will then be summarized. After the historical development of sexuality in contemporary romance novels has been presented, the sexual components of the four categories of series romance lines analyzed in this research will be compared. This comparison will then be related to the sexual social milieu of teenagers of the time, thereby providing an explanation for the changed adolescent series romance market.

The Path to Sexuality

Adult Romance Novels. Carol Thurston (1987), in her research on erotic romance novels, delineates the path leading to its development. The path began in the 1960s, due to an amalgam of the effects of a series of civil rights movements focusing on "freedom", and the development of the birth control pill, which gave women a sense of escape from the reproductive functions of their bodies. The Pill separated sex from procreation. A central faction of the Women's Movement of the time focused on the rights of women to enjoy and control their own sexuality rather than remain sexual "second-class citizens", subservient to the sexual desires and control of the men in their lives (Thurston, 1987; Davidson, 1988). The concept of the "private as public", proposed within the feminist movement, was extended by the women of this faction to include the most "private" issue of all--sexuality (Davidson, 1988). The Pill, the sexual component of the Women's Movement, and the "free love" component of the countercultural movement all could be reduced to one thing--freedom. Thus, what has been labelled the sexual revolution was born (Thurston, 1987).

During the 1960s and 1970s research was being conducted on sexuality--that is, male sexuality. Women were ignored by the largely male researchers and female sexuality remained a mystery.

> The time was ripe for something to fill the void, something that would provide both a testing ground and a sense of sexual sisterhood, of peer consensus and approval. That is why, when it did emerge, it came from women themselves, in the form of fiction, personal memoirs, and pop psychology dealing with female sexual fantasies, behavior, and needs. (Thurston, 1987, pp.18-19)

In the 1970s, Cosmopolitan magazine, facing a rapidly declining readership, was resurrected by beginning to focus on

female sexuality and female sexual activity. Cosmopolitan equated feminism with women's enjoyment and control of their own sexuality. The path to independence was to begin in the home, with sexual independence (Thurston, 1987).

> Perhaps the most widely read body of writing for and by women, however, and the most consistently overlooked contributor to consciousness-raising among women at the grassroots level, were the popular erotic historical romance novels published during the 1970s. (Thurston, 1987, p.19)

The first of what were labelled bodice-rippers (because of the way in which the hero, overcome by passion, would tear off the bodice of the heroine's gown) was written by Kathleen Woodiwiss in 1972--The Flame and the Flower. Sales for this type of novel immediately began to soar. Bodice-rippers were

> lusty tales about feisty heroines who broke over traditional social and sexual traces to embark on high adventure, far from the paths followed by their traditional sisters, only to discover their own sexuality. (Thurston, 1987, p.19)

The increased recognition of women's vulnerability to sexual assault and the development of rape crisis counseling centers during the 1970s contributed to the creation of heroines who, filled with anger, battled for control over their own bodies. By 1980, however, the erotic historical romance novel had lost popularity. As the Women's Movement continued to evolve and its tenets increasingly diffused, readers wrote to publishers, condemning the "unrealistic, virginal" heroine and the violence that was usually fused with the sexual encounters in the bodice-rippers. In addition, readers wanted more mature heroines (heroines in bodice-rippers were typically in their teens or very early 20s) and more realistic plots.

Thus, in 1981, the erotic series romance was born with the creation of "Candlelight Ecstasy Romances". Within two years, there were 12 erotic series romance lines on the market, releasing a total of 60 titles each month. These novels featured an erotic element, but without the rape and violence contained in bodice-rippers. They also featured more mature, nontraditional heroines.

> Though without conscious intent or plea, in rejecting rape as sexual fantasy the great majority of romance readers had freed themselves to recognize and embrace the role of erotica in developing their own sexuality, and ultimately a sense of self. (Thurston, 1987, p.26)

Erotic series romances, particularly the lines of "Harlequin Temptation" and "Silhouette Desire", continue in their popularity today, more than a decade later.

Adolescent Romance Novels. Christian-Smith (1987, 1988, 1990) suggests that the teen romance novel of the 1970s featured sexuality as a central issue. Although intercourse did not often occur in the stories, it did occur on occasion. Even in the books in which intercourse did not take place, sexuality was a large component. The struggle for control over the heroine's own body, both with her boyfriend and with her family, is a key feature of these novels. Christian-Smith describes the content as a reflection of the sexual struggles that were occurring during that period of time. In the novels, intercourse was portrayed as a dangerous practice that must be controlled. When intercourse did occur, it was "punished" by pregnancy.

Although adolescent romance novels of the 1970s did portray sexuality (however negatively it may have been), the first of the

teen series romance novels are marked by it absence. The progression of the 1980s coincided with changes both in the adolescent series romance market and novel content. The interaction of these two elements with socio-sexual conditions will now be examined.

Comparative Sexual Content

The failed teen series romances are characterized by an amazing lack of sexuality, even as late as 1986. Kissing is presented as an extreme in sexual behaviour. It does not occur with any regularity and is described in exclusively emotional and romantic rather than physical terms. Detail in the descriptions is lacking as well.

In two of the books analyzed, even kissing is taboo on the first date. In one case the first date ends with a hand-squeeze, while in the other case they do not even hold hands until the second date. Physical feelings are not recognized, and thus are not granted validity.

It appears that the issue of sexuality is recognized to some degree by the latter part of the 1980s. In a 1986 novel the first kiss is described in semi-erotic terms. After that particular passage, however, there is an immediate return to asexuality.

The "Sweet Dreams" line of romance novels began with an apparent lack of sexuality as well, with chaste hugs and kisses, described in emotional terms. As the decade wore on, however, the books in the "Sweet Dreams" line began describing the encounters more physically and in greater detail. Subtle indications of

physical feelings were granted legitimacy. Sexuality became a part of perception and daily life, although behaviours remained quite limited.

The introduction of "Sweet Valley High" shortly after the introduction of the adult erotic series romance brought with it the greatest degree of sexual content in the adolescent market at the time. Although behaviours are generally limited to kissing, descriptions are extensive, and the kissing is anything but chaste. Sexual feelings are granted legitimacy, and sexuality plays a large role in daily perception.

The extent of sexual content is clearly the greatest in the adult series romances analyzed. Sexual intercourse, detailed and explicit description, and sexuality-based perception are the norm.

The overwhelming lack of sexuality in the failed teen series romances clearly contributed to their downfall. The sexual content of the romance novels during the 1980s gained importance for adolescent girls because of the changing socio-sexual milieu. The central feature of the romance-reading process is that the reader puts herself in the place of the heroine; essentially, the reader <u>becomes</u> the heroine while reading. In order for this to be possible, the story must sufficiently approximate reality. Given the increased position of sexuality in adolescents' lives, in terms of behaviour and attitudes, and its presence throughout popular culture and the media, the denial of adolescent sexuality in the failed teen series romances essentially denied adolescent reality. Thus, the reader could not easily take the place of the heroine.

Because of the denial of reality, these novels were unable to fulfill one of their primary functions, that of anticipatory socialization. Research evidence shows that sexuality is a part of adolescent dating, in fact increasingly so (Katchadourian, 1989; Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1986; Imperiale, 1991; Pesmen, 1991; Alberta Medical Association, 1991) and at increasingly younger ages (Pesmen, 1991; Alberta Medical Association, 1991). Novels that deny sexuality cannot, therefore, teach girls from the target group, ages 11 to 14, about the nature of their upcoming roles and situations they may soon be encountering.

One might argue that if reality was not sufficiently approximated, perhaps fantasy could take its place--is that not the attraction of science fiction, for example? Unfortunately, the failed romances also failed in their generation of fantasy. Not only is sexuality denied for the adolescent characters of these novels, it is also denied for older siblings, for adults, and for culture as a whole. The suitability of this as a fantasy-world is doubtful at a time when the culture is becoming increasingly sexualized.

Because the failed teen series romances do not adequately address reality nor fantasy, they are also unable to fulfill their other two primary functions, those of vicarious need fulfillment and vicarious problem-solving (Finn, 1988; Miles, 1988; Modleski, 1982; Jensen, 1984; Radway, 1984). Romance novels must address reality sufficiently so that the real needs and problems created by society for women and girls in terms of heterosexual relationships

are addressed. Needs and problems created by issues of sexuality became a larger part of adolescent heterosexual relationships during the 1980s. Romance novels must generate fantasy sufficiently so that the reader can vicariously experience the fulfillment of those needs and the solutions to those problems.

The books of "Sweet Valley High" are able to fulfill the functions that the failed romances were unable to. The female characters' concerns about attractiveness, dating, and sexuality reflect the reality of the lives of adolescent girls. Whether one agrees or disagrees with the novels' presentation of these as the central concerns of adolescent girls, the fact remains that these are their central concerns, which must be addressed in order to fulfill the functions of anticipatory socialization, vicarious need fulfillment, and vicarious problem-solving. Fulfilling these functions is what sells books and keeps lines in business.

While "Sweet Valley High" combines elements of fantasy and adolescent reality regarding heterosexual relationships, the adult series romances combine elements of fantasy and adult reality regarding heterosexual relationships. Concerns about the future in relation to romance are typical for girls. Adolescent girls have always read adult series romance novels (Rivera, 1990; Baker, 1985; Miles, 1988; Thurston, 1987). This research argues, however, that the 1980s elevated these concerns for teenage girls and shone a more urgent light upon them, pushing the girls in increasing numbers to the adult series romances for socialization and fulfillment. What was it about the 1980s that bound concerns about

heterosexual relationships, sexuality, and the future more closely together? The greater experience of divorce in families with children and the resulting changed meaning of sexuality for adolescent girls who experienced parental divorce may have been the key.

Divorce and the Changed Meaning of Sexuality

Sharon Thompson (1984) first proposed that sexuality had a different meaning for the adolescent girls of that time compared to the "feminist" generation that grew up in the 1960s in her discussion about the failure of the feminist movement to catch on among these girls. According to Thompson, these changed attitudes were the result of different childhood family environments. In comparison with the family environments of second-wave feminists, subsequent generations have experienced a much higher rate of family breakup through divorce. Of people born in the 1968-69 cohort, 15% experienced family breakup by the age of one, and 40% by the age of fourteen. Because of the consequences of divorce in terms of family dynamics, adolescent girls, in their romantic involvements, try to retain a link between sex and romance, love, security, and commitment in a culture that has increasingly denied the legitimacy of this link, or at least the long-term viability of the link.

In constructing this argument the changes in marital status that have occurred in recent years will first be presented. Following this, the results of research on the overall effects of divorce on both parents and children will be presented,

particularly in reference to heterosexual relationships. The link between divorce and a changed meaning of sexuality for adolescent girls will then be discussed in more detail. Finally, the consequences of the changed meaning of sexuality along with other effects of divorce for romantic reading choices will be addressed.

Canadian Divorce Rate

The rising divorce rate in Canada and the United States has been recognized by both researchers and laypersons. Children and adolescents of the 1980s have experienced family breakup due to divorce more than any prior generation. A combination of changing social circumstances have contributed to the incidence of divorce. Changing divorce laws in particular have always had strong effects on the divorce rate (Baker, 1990), and tremendous changes have accompanied the most recent generations of children and adolescents as they have grown up. The first comprehensive Canadian divorce legislation was brought forward in 1968, at which time divorce was permitted after a three-year separation if no other reasons, such as abuse or adultery, were given (Baker, 1990). Since this legislation, "the annual number of divorces in Canada has risen steadily" (Statistic Canada, 1990, p.1). By 1969, the divorce rate had doubled. In 1978, the divorce rate was six times that of 1968 (Baker, 1990). The year 1985 brought a new Divorce act, at which time divorce was permitted after a one-year separation, barring any other reasons for divorce. Nine out of ten divorce petitioners in 1986/87 gave a one-year period of separation as the reason for seeking divorce (Statistics Canada, 1990). In 1987 there were

87 000 divorces, three times that of the early 1970s. During this same year, the divorce rate per 100 000 married female population was 1 372, twice the rate of 1970 (Statistics Canada, 1990).

> Over the years, the most significant change in marital status has been in the proportion of the population that is divorced. A larger proportion of the 1986 population was divorced than was the case in any of the other three earlier Census years presented here. This is partly a reflection of the changes in divorce laws, which have made it much easier to obtain a divorce, and may also be partly attributable to an increased reluctance to remarry, once divorced. (Statistics Canada, 1990, p.1)

It has been projected that by the year 2000, the majority of children in North America will spend part of their lives in a single-parent household (Kantrowitz, Wingert, Rosenberg, Quade & Foote, 1992). The potential ramifications of this trend are enormous. To examine what the potential ramifications will be, discussion will now turn to past research on the effects of divorce on children and parents.

Effects of Divorce on Children

The effects of parental divorce on children have been found to be astounding. Divorce differs from other traumatic life events in that with other events, the child can depend on the parents' reassurance. In the case of divorce, it is the parents who have inflicted the pain upon the child. Thus, the child is unable to feel reassured by them (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). The child usually does not receive reassurance from other sources either; 75% of children do not receive help from the extended family, community, school, church, or friends (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) have conducted one of the largest-scale studies of the effects of divorce on children, with

the California Children of Divorce Project. They conducted intensive in-depth interviews with the members of 60 families at the time of separation, and then followed up with 56 families 18 months and five years later.

Regardless of age, there are several central themes in the reactions of children to divorce: (a) anxiety and fright about future needs being met and future relationships (75% of children); (b) sadness (50%) and yearning for the absent parent (66%); (c) worry; (d) feelings of rejection by their parents (50%); (e) loneliness; (f) conflicted loyalties; (g) anger; and (h) guilt. Eighteen months later, although neediness and loneliness have decreased, 25% of children still suffer from depression and 25% remain angry (especially adolescent girls). One-third express worry about their mothers, and fathers are perceived as increasingly unacceptable role models, especially by older children and adolescents. Five years after the initial separation, an equal number of children (i.e one-third) are doing very well or very poorly. Feelings of rejection by their mothers are experienced by 17% of children, while 39% feel rejected and unloved by their fathers. One-quarter are disappointed with the visiting relationship with their non-custodial fathers. More children are experiencing moderate to severe depression (37%) than at the 18-month mark, as well as intense loneliness (27%).

Although central themes are generalizable regardless of age, Wallerstein and Kelly found that specific forms of the general reactions turned out to be an overwhelming function of age and

developmental stage. Thus, the specific reactions to divorce fall into four categories: (a) preschool (3-5½); (b) young school-age (6-8); (c) older school-age (9-12); and (d) adolescents.

Studies have found consistent results regarding the effects of divorce on boys, regardless of age. The studies regarding the effects on girls, however, lack consistency. Research has consistently found more extreme, adverse, and long-lasting effects on boys. In one study (Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985), 699 elementary school children were evaluated on 30 measures, including psychometric tests, interviews, teacher ratings, and parent interviews. The boys from divorced families rated more poorly than boys from intact families on 6 of the 30 measures. No differences were found between girls from divorced families and girls from intact families.

Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1985) examined the differential adjustment of boys and girls with an average age of 10.1, in 180 families. No significant differences were found between girls from divorced homes and girls from intact homes. Boys from divorced homes, however, exhibited more externalizing behaviour (i.e. acting out), more internalizing behaviour (i.e. depression, anxiety), and less social competence than boys from intact homes. Upon remarriage, these differences disappeared, while for girls large differences in externalizing, internalizing, and social competence suddenly appeared.

Another study, utilizing a sample of girls in grades three and six, found no psychological or social differences between those

from divorced families and those from intact families (Kalter, Reimer, Brickman & Chen, 1985). Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) found no significant male-female differences among children under the age of 12 at the time of the initial separation; 18 months later, however, twice as many girls as boys had improved and adjusted. Adolescent girls, on the other hand, adjusted remarkable poorly and showed marked detrimental effects of the parental divorce.

The lack of consistent findings for girls compared to boys is explained by Kalter and colleagues (1985) as due to methodological differences among studies--developmental stage of the sample, nature of the data collected, and dimensions of experience examined. Consistent findings for the effects of divorce on girls are found with samples of adolescents and their reports of specific life experiences regarding feelings about oneself and heterosexual adjustment. Studies utilizing this type of methodology find consistent, adverse, and long-lasting effects. While young girls may adjust remarkably well to divorce compared to boys, adolescent girls do not. In terms of feelings about oneself and heterosexual relationships, adolescent girls experience greater difficulty than adolescent boys.

These studies find more precocious sexual activity with girls from divorced homes than girls from intact homes (Kalter, 1977, 1984). The girls who were most troubled had experienced the divorce in early childhood and had little contact with fathers for an extended period of time. In addition to precocious sexual activity, abuse of drugs or alcohol and hostile interactions with

their mothers were also problems (Kalter, 1984). A study of 242 adolescent girls categorized families as matriarchal, egalitarian, or patriarchal, based on the presence of the father and the daughters' perceptions of who was the primary decision-maker in the family (Roebuck & McGee, 1977). The findings suggested that matriarchal families were characterized by the most permissive sexual attitudes while patriarchal families were characterized by the least permissive sexual attitudes; egalitarian families were intermediate. In the matriarchal and egalitarian families, 50% of the adolescent girls had experienced intercourse. In the patriarchal families, only 30% had experienced intercourse.

Wallerstein and Kelly's study (1980) found that the central reaction of adolescents, especially girls, is anxiety, specifically about heterosexual relationships, sex, and marriage. They experienced an intense fear of failure in these areas.

> Although preoccupations with one's own sexual attractiveness and success or failure in sexual performance is common during adolescence, the normal anxiety levels were increased many fold. Sometimes parents contributed to their youngster's anxiety by providing explicit lurid details of the other parent's sexual inadequacies. Even without such contributions, the adolescents were sufficiently identified with one or the other parent and sufficiently anxious about their own emerging sexuality to assume straightaway and unquestioningly the greater likelihood of their failure. (p.86)

After their parents' separations, one-third of adolescents distanced themselves from the family through increased social and sexual activity. On the other hand, one-third took on greater positions of responsibility in the family. The divorce led to greater maturity and moral growth in some adolescents, who began trying to plan to avoid their parents' mistakes. Among those girls

whose normal developmental paths into adolescence were disrupted, pseudoadolescent behaviour in the form of sexual acting-out was common.

The research activity in the area of daughters of divorce and heterosexual relationships was spawned by Mavis Hetherington (1972). She studied 24 girls, ages 13 to 17, from divorced, widowed, and intact homes, on several measures. The key findings focused on heterosexual relationships. The girls from divorced homes were observed in a recreation center to seek praise, encouragement, and attention from male adults more than girls from either widowed or intact homes. These girls also initiated physical contact and nearness with male peers more often, and spent more time in male areas of the recreation center; this was not because of preference for "male" versus "female" activities or gender-role orientation, where no differences existed among groups.

In their choices of seating arrangements with a male interviewer, the girls from divorced homes sat close and adjacent. Girls from intact homes sat close to and across from the male interviewer, considered a "normal" seating arrangement in the situation. Girls from widowed homes sat across and away from the male interviewer. No significant differences among groups existed with a female interviewer. With a male interviewer, girls of divorce spoke and smiled more, had more eye contact, and more of a forward orientation and open posture than girls in the other groups. Girls from widowed homes spoke and smiled less, had more of an away orientation and a closed posture, and had less eye

contact. The nonverbal behaviour of girls from intact homes was intermediate.

In the interview itself, girls in both types of father-absent homes expressed feelings of less security around male peers or male adults than girls from intact homes. Girls from divorced homes participated in the most heterosexual activity, girls from widowed homes the least. The greatest degree of conflict with mothers was reported by girls of divorce. They also rated their fathers' warmth and competence as lower than did girls in other groups. Girls from both types of father-absent homes rated their relations with other adult males more poorly than girls from intact homes. The self-esteem of the girls from divorced homes was the lowest.

In interviews with the mothers, those who were divorced reported more conflict with their daughters after adolescence than did the other mothers, but not before adolescence. The divorced mothers also reported less disciplinary consistency and greater punishment for sexual curiosity and activity in their daughters after adolescence than did the other mothers.

All of the reported effects were found to be greater when separation from the father occurred before rather than after the age of five. Hetherington concluded that father-absence contributes to an inability to act appropriately with males after adolescence. Girls from divorced homes respond with overt heterosexual participation, while girls from widowed homes respond with withdrawal from heterosexual participation.

The U.S. National Research Council, in 1987, concluded that

children from intact homes are less likely to engage in intercourse in adolescence than children from divorced homes (Katchadourian, 1989). Entry into adolescence may be the key to the changing reactions of girls to divorce.

> The vulnerability to problems in feminine self-esteem and heterosexual adjustment may not emerge until these issues become centrally important developmentally [in adolescence]. (Kalter et al., 1985, p.539).

The effects of being a child of divorce are enduring as well, in terms of heterosexual adjustment. Several studies have been conducted with adults who were children of divorce.

Adult Children of Divorce

A national sample of adult women who grew up in divorced versus intact homes found that those from divorced homes had greater marital problems and a higher divorce rate (Kulka & Weingarten, 1979). When compared to women who grew up in intact and widowed homes, those from divorced homes married earlier, were more likely to have been pregnant at the time of marriage, and chose less adequate husbands (Hetherington & Parke, 1979).

Wallerstein (1985) conducted ten-year follow-up interviews with 40 people who were ages 9 or older at the initial time of the California Children of Divorce Project. These people were currently ages 19 to 29. Approximately 25% of the women and 19% of the men were married. One-third of the women had been pregnant outside of marriage.

Strong feelings, especially sadness, regret, and yearning were prevalent. A large proportion (40%) of the sample still had strong, clear, fresh memories of the separation. More than

two-thirds felt that their childhood and adolescence had been significantly burdened by the divorce of their parents.

> Whether these youngsters were doing well or poorly, and whether they defended, praised, or criticized their parents' divorce, and unrelated to the contact with both parents over the years, most of them shared the sense of having been deprived or needy, which they related to having missed the important experience of the intact, together family. (p.550)

For more than 80% of the sample, the effects of the family breakup, ten years later, still played a moderate to high role in their psychological functioning. About half continued to feel intense anger.

There was an overwhelming concern with how to select a marital partner. More than 75% of the sample were enthusiastic about marriage and a romantic view of love, and of those still single, 75% planned to marry someday. However, 66% expressed a fear of marriage. Approximately one-quarter were strongly fearful of repeating their parents' mistakes, and 40% were moderately fearful. Most obvious was the extremely strong link this sample made between sexual activity and love, a link they did not see in their parents' lives. Research evidence indicates that this link certainly does not mean abstinence. Rather, the daughters end up replaying their mothers' searches for emotional intimacy, and love, through sex.

A subgroup of women, constituting one-third of Wallerstein's sample, exhibited profound difficulties in heterosexual relationships.

> These young women are attractive and intelligent. Yet they are worried, even despairing, fearful of being rejected in their search for a man who would care for them and [are] burdened by their anxieties which they related directly to their parents' divorce. (p.551-552)

> They seemed to be drifting from...man to man....Several had selected older lovers. Their interest was not primarily in economic support, since they did not choose wealthy men, and they continued to work at mostly poor paying jobs. They sought men who would be caring and treat them well. (p.551)

Overall, this sample reported that feelings of loneliness and a lack of rules or discipline characterized their adolescent years. Having to take on earlier positions of responsibility caused bittersweet feelings. They wished they could have had someone who would have taken care of them.

In order to explain the reactions of adolescents to living in a divorced home, one must examine the role of the parents. The parents' reactions to the divorce play a large role in the effects on the children, particularly in terms of heterosexual relationships. The normal developmental path through adolescence is disrupted by the parents' reactions to being divorced, especially the mothers', and the changed parent-child relations.

Normal Adolescent Developmental Path

The normal adolescent path to independence takes place over several years. The teen vascillates forward and back, alternating between independent strivings and returning to "home base". With the divorce decision, the "home base" is toppled, parents become preoccupied with their own needs and problems. Thus, adolescents feel pressured to achieve independence more quickly because the family support structure is no longer there for the normal forward-back vascillation--they feel that the time available to them for growing up has been shortened (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

Parental Reactions to Divorce

General. The Virginia Longitudinal Study of Divorce (Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1982) conducted interviews with 144 couples who divorced, at two months after the divorce, one year after the divorce, and two years after the divorce. The first year was characterized by anxiety, depression, anger, rejection and feelings of incompetence, more for women than for men. With men, the immediate initial changes were greater than for women, but the effects among women lasted much longer. Within two years of the divorce, a general improvement was found among both women and men, but more among men.

Wallerstein and Kelly (1980), in their interviews with 60 families, found profound effects of the divorce decision on the couples. Chronic depression was common, but more among women than men. Mild to moderate depression was experienced by 30% of the men and 60% of the women. Profound depression was experienced by 30% of men and women. In total, 90% of the women were clinically depressed.

Feelings of anger and bitterness toward the spouse were common, even typical, but less among men (80%) than women (more than 80%); women's anger was also much more intense. More than half of the women and just under half of the men were critical in all of their comments about their former spouse to their children. More women (more than 20%) than men (less than 20%) were embittered-chaotic parents, dragging their children into battles with the former spouse.

Eighteen months after the separation, more women than men

looked upon the marriage wistfully and the divorce negatively. At the initial time of the separation, 33% of women had such feelings; 18 months later that proportion had risen to more than 50%. Depression was still being experienced by more women than men. More women than men were lonely (66% versus 40%). Intense anger was still felt by 20% of the women, but fewer men.

Five years after the separation women remained angrier and were less friendly to their former spouses than men. Restabilization generally began during year two for men, but not until year three for women. Those who were not yet remarried were exceptionally lonely, especially women.

Divorced women express less happiness and fulfillment in their lives than widowed women or women in their first marriages. Those who are remarried are also not as happy as widowed women who have remarried or women in their first marriages (Hetherington, 1972).

Heterosexual Relations. According to Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1982), people who divorce experience a decline in feelings of competence, particularly with respect to heterosexual relationships. There is generally a flurry of social activity during the first year. Men peak social and sexual activity during the first year. For women, however, there is a steady increase in social and sexual relationships over time. After two years the central problem among Wallerstein and Kelly's sample was loneliness. Women in particular spoke of the development of a need for emotional intimacy; they reported feelings of depression, desperation, and low self-esteem following sexual encounters

lacking emotional intimacy. The most important factor in changing the self-concept two years after the divorce was the establishment of an intimate heterosexual relationship.

Among the separated and subsequently divorced couples in the California Children of Divorce Project, "there were many cases of infidelity and an astonishing degree of long-standing sexual deprivation" (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p.14). One-third of women and more of the men began active social and sexual lives soon after the separation, a reaction against the sexual deprivation and emotional unresponsiveness that typically characterized their marriages. A major concern for parents was their own changing sexuality. They became preoccupied with sex, which led to worries about their children's sexuality, and consequently increased the child's perception of the parent as a sexual being. Intensified sexual activity, labelled frenetic patterning (p.106) occurred among a significant number of parents post-separation. Sexual activity often occurred within the home and with the full knowledge of the children. Within 18 months after the separation, 60% of women had already engaged in some sexual activity.

Parent-Child Relations

Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1982) report a steady decline in the father's availability to children over two years. In addition, parents, especially mothers, display a lack of control over their children. Intense anger is directed at the mother, who is usually the custodial parent.

In Wallerstein and Kelly's sample (1980), more than half of

the children had witnessed spousal abuse and/or accusations of promiscuity at least occasionally. Within six months post-separation, 25% of the mothers admitted to being less available to their children. Only 10-15% of children felt their mothers and fathers were sensitive and understanding to their distress. Overall, two-thirds of mother-child relationships deteriorated post-separation, even more among older children and adolescents. The older the child, the greater the lapse in parenting.

The "sexual" parent causes anxiety for the adolescent, sometimes because of the youth of the parents' new lovers. Older children and teens respond to the parents' sexual behaviour with intense, overwhelming excitement and jealousy. Many become preoccupied with sexual thoughts and fantasies. Several girls in Wallerstein and Kelly's sample were propelled into precocious adolescence--they were eager to become as sexually active as possible as soon as possible.

> The psychological and social changes in the lives of many parents led them to preoccupations and behavior which closely paralleled those of their adolescent children, and threatened to narrow the generation gap. (p.84)

> The most distressing aspect of such changes from the child's perspective was the conscious or unconscious competition from their parents they now experienced. This competition was exceedingly painful for the adolescents who felt deserted and betrayed by the parents they had fully expected to support their own growth towards adulthood. (p.84)

Frequently, one parent would question the child about the other parent's sexual activities.

Divorce and Sexuality--Summary

In general, research has found that the primary enduring

effects of divorce on girls do not appear until adolescence, at which time heterosexual relationships and sexuality become central concerns. Sexuality is a larger part of teenagers' lives now than it has been in the past, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Because the divorce experience magnifies the normal adolescent concerns and worries, sexuality has become an even larger part of the lives of teens from divorced families, who have become an increasingly larger segment of the population. Prior research has suggested that the absence of someone in the father role may be the cause of problems in heterosexual adjustment. Fox (1981) suggests that the presence of a father-figure facilitates social learning of adult male-female interaction patterns, additional moral authority, and additional social resources. Kalter and colleagues (1985) suggest two potential paternal functions in the lives of girls:

> First, a father can be a girl's ally in her early struggle to separate psychologically from mother and in her continued efforts to establish a firm sense of her own feminine individuality. Second, a father can serve as a source of masculine-based self-esteem for his daughter by accepting and valuing her femininity (543).

However, the exceptionally poor response of girls to the presence of a stepfather (Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1985) detracts to some extent from the strength of this argument. This research suggests that the greater sexuality of adolescents of divorce may be the result of a combination of familial factors. First, because many of these teens must take on increased positions of responsibility and thereby "grow up faster" (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Wallerstein, 1985), they may have little in common with same-age peers and begin to associate with older peers, for whom sexuality

plays a greater role (Hetherington & Anderson, 1988). Second, adolescent girls, who are usually close to their mothers during childhood, see the adverse, enduring effects of "losing" a man on her psychological and social well-being (Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1982; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Hetherington, 1972), as well as the beneficial effects of establishing an intimate heterosexual relationship (Hetherinton, Cox & Cox, 1982; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Thus, the importance of "having" a man to one's own happiness is modeled by the mothers to the daughters. Third, the prevalence and significance of sexuality in their parents' lives before the divorce (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980), during the divorce process (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980), and after the divorce (Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1982; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980) demonstrate to the children the centrality of sexuality in adult life and in heterosexual relationships. Fourth, the perceived threat of the strong, emerging parents' sexuality and a sense of competition may drive adolescent girls into premature sexual activity. Finally, the changed parent-child relations and the lapse in parenting experienced by older children and adolescents may motivate teenage girls to seek reassurance, love, and attention elsewhere; they do not receive this from the extended family, community, church, school, or peers (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980), thus the only reliable alternative is to seek it through heterosexual relationships. Support for this notion was found in an Alberta Health study (1990) examining the reported reasons for intercourse by adolescents. The two most frequently cited reasons

were (a) a wish to be liked or loved, and (b) to fulfill unmet needs for acceptance, closeness, and nurturance.

The consequences parental divorce has for teenage girls'perceptions of sexuality along with its meaning will now be examined.

Changed Meaning of Sexuality

Sharon Thompson's argument (1984) about the changed meaning of sexuality among today's adolescent girls is based on 150 interviews. In her explanation of why the feminist movement has failed to "catch on" among current generations of girls, she brings up the issue of changed familial environments and their consequences for sexuality. Whereas second-wave feminists, according to Thompson, fought for the right to independence and personal freedom, subsequent generations of girls, because of the rapidly increasing experience of parental divorce, have perceived independence as inescapable, forced upon them in childhood with the breakup of their families and subsequent changes in family structure and dynamics. Research evidence supports the notion of the perception of imposed independence (Wallerstein, 1985; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1982; Hetherington & Anderson, 1988; Petersen, Crouter & Wilson, 1988). Thus, these girls, rather than seeking freedom and independence, are seeking security and attachment (Thompson, 1984). They try to tie sex in with monogamy, true love, or at least proof that he cares (Thompson, 1984). That is, according to Thompson, for the "feminist" generation sexuality was frequently equated with

"freedom", while for current generations it is equated with "security". Divorced mothers, over the years, model an almost desperate search for a relationship in which sex will be linked with true emotional intimacy, experiencing profound depression and anxiety when they are unable to find it (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). The children of divorce, particularly girls, after becoming adults, express an exceptionally strong link between sex and love, perceiving it as the way to avoid their parents' mistakes (Wallerstein, 1985). They do not realize that rather than avoiding their parents' mistakes, they are frequently repeating them. Their mothers express the sex-intimacy link as well after being divorced, but sought its realization through increasing sexual activity (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980); similarly, while their daughters are expressing this link, they, too, demonstrate an increased level of sexual activity (Kalter, 1977, 1984; Roebuck & McGee, 1977; Wallerstein, 1985; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Hetherington, 1972; Katchadourian, 1989).

The sex-love link has been a part of heterosexual relationships for many generations. Girls would be willing to give an increased level of sexual activity with greater levels of "love", as typically shown through commitment. Conversely, boys would be willing to provide greater levels of commitment with increased levels of sexual activity. The specific nature of this link, however, has changed as a result of the rising divorce experience. In the past, love was, ideally, a prerequisite for sexual intercourse (Weil, 1990). Among girls of divorce, the

priorities of the link have been altered; in their search for love they turn to sexual activity, and perceive sexual desire and intercourse as signs of love.

Love is no longer considered interchangeable with commitment, and thus, love itself has a changed meaning. Although love associated with a lifetime commitment remains the ideal among girls of divorce (Wallerstein, 1985), it is not something they expect. Love may exist without that commitment. This divergence is evident in the 1991 Seventeen magazine survey of 1 003 adolescents and young adults (Pesmen, 1991). This survey found that 60% of girls say it is important to be "in love" before having sex. However, 75% of adolescents, even those as young as 14, report having been "in love" at least once. When asked why they would have sex with a date, more cited "love" than "commitment".

Thompson (1984), because of the transient notion of "love" among teens, uses the term "romance" in its place. The link between sex and love (or romance) is evident in her interviews with teenage girls.

> Romance [i.e. love] is what the narratives begin to be about--the mystery chemistry of attraction and the ensuing chain reaction: I wanted him, he wanted me....Like the murder in a detective novel, sex makes it a story worth telling. Sex makes it adult, real. Romance is the quest for sexual destiny, the search for a partner custom-made by the stars, the genes, or by so many random subtle, and exquisitely specific factors that the process may as well be ascribed to magic. It is the search for the one or ones who will recognize and validate by loving or having sex with the seeker, the one waiting to be found.
>
> Romance is suspense, the tale. Sex is the detail, the proof. Sex is also the turning point, the climax, the culmination, the end. Romance begins with the turn on. It makes the clock start ticking. Sex is the test, the apothesis of romance, the transubstantiation of romance into the body....Sex is validation, affirmation, the response of

> the body that is thought to make it impossible to lie about two crucial issues: identity (worthiness) and desire. (p.135)

The sex-love link held by today's girls is problematic in two ways. First, males associate much lower levels of affection with sexual activity. For example, almost half of boys, compared to less than one-quarter of girls, would have sex with a date out of "sexual attraction"; more than one-fifth of boys, compared to only 6% of girls, would have sex with a date out of "fun" (Pesmen, 1991). Thus, while sexual interaction may lead girls to perceive "love", boys may perceive "strong affection" or simply "sexual attraction". Second, Western culture legitimizes the boys' perspective more than the girls' perspective, the result of the sexual revolution and its sociocultural effects (Thompson, 1984; Chilman, 1988). Boys have given in to sexual freedom, but the girls of divorce have not.

> The pain and frustration that many heterosexual girls feel stems, largely, from the futility of trying to blindly strike out the old bargain of sex for love under changed material and social conditions. (Thompson, 1984, 374)

How might the effects of the divorce experience and the changed meaning of sexuality affect popular cultural reading choices among teenage girls and subsequent changes in the adolescent romance novel market? This research postulates that these experiences, when combined with the overall rise in adolescent sexuality during the 1980s, led adolescent girls away from the "sweet" teen romances and toward the "erotic" adult series romance novels.

The Rise of the Adult Series Romance Among Teens

The greater prevalence of the divorce experience among

adolescent girls increased the popularity of the adult series romance novel during the 1980s, with a concomitant decline in the popularity of the adolescent series romance novel. This was related to two consequences of the divorce experience: (a) a concern about the future, and (b) a link between sex and love. The concern about the future, particularly in relation to heterosexual relationships and sexuality is well documented in the literature (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Wallerstein, 1985; Kalter et al., 1985). The link between sex and love is also well documented, and in fact, has been explicitly expressed by the children of divorce themselves (Wallerstein, 1985). The necessity of vicarious need fulfillment and problem-solving through popular culture among these girls during the 1980s would have been great. It is the adult series romances that would have best addressed those needs. Through the presentation of adult characters in an adult romantic and sexual relationship, these books provide adolescent girls with a "picture" of the future--through fantasy, <u>their</u> future. The adolescent readers' need to be reassured that their futures, in terms of heterosexual relationships, are bright. Any concerns they have must be addressed. These needs are fulfilled and the concerns addressed vicariously through the reading process.

The concern about the future of heterosexual relationships is compounded by the fact that the divorced parents of these girls do not provide adequate role models for a "successful" relationship. Girls of divorce cannot turn to their parents for anticipatory socialization; this function must be fulfilled elsewhere, and

popular culture is one of the settings where it can occur. The adult series romance novel, featuring adult characters, can provide anticipatory socialization.

The adult series romance novel is also one of the few places in contemporary culture where the sex-love link is transubstantiated. The typical plot in the adult series romance novel is as follows:

1. The reluctant heroine "gives in" to the hero and they have sex, although they have known each other for only a relatively short period of time.

2. The heroine regrets her actions because of the lack of commitment or at least the lack of "love" in the relationship, but she and the hero continue their sexual relationship.

3. At the end of the story the heroine is finally "rewarded" and the sex-love link is completed with the hero's "love", in one of two ways: (a) the love was always there but because the hero did not verbalize it (thinking that his actions spoke for him), the heroine was unaware of it, or (b) the hero finally realizes that his overwhelming sexual desire for the heroine, and the wonderful sexual experiences they have had together, are actually signs of his intense love for her. In either instance, sexual attraction and sexual experience turn out to be <u>signs of love</u>.

The forging of the sex-love link, and particularly the experience of sex as a sign of love, in adult series romances, reflects and provides reassurance for the perceptions of a large proportion of teenage girls in the 1980s -- girls of divorce. The

combined characteristics of future heterosexual relationships and the sex-love link, of great importance to these girls, are unique to the adult series romance novel. Adolescent series romance novels are characterized by an absence of both futuristic and sexual features. Adolescent soap opera series romance novels address sexuality as a whole, but sex itself is notably absent. There is no question that adolescent soap opera series romances are very popular among adolescents--new lines continue to be created, and some books in the "Sweet Valley High" line are already in their eighth printing. For a significant proportion of teenage girls in the 1980s, however, the switch to the adult series romance novel, which was "eroticized" in the early 1980s, was paramount. The rising prominence of sexuality in contemporary culture, along with the rising prominence of the divorce experience among adolescents, combined to create conditions that likely fostered a large-scale move from adolescent series romance novels to both the teen soap opera series romance and the adult series romance.

Given the evidence that these are the reading changes that have occurred, discussion in the next chapter will focus on the potential consequences of these changes in terms of the gender role socialization of teenage readers. What is being said in "Sweet Valley High" and in adult series romances, both explicitly and implicitly, about gender roles and relations? After reading these novels what have teenage girls learned about themselves, the future, romance, education, and careers?

CHAPTER 6

CONSEQUENCES FOR READING CHANGES ON GENDER-ROLE SOCIALIZATION

If, as this research has suggested, adolescent girls, as the 1980s progressed, moved away from reading adolescent series romance novels and toward reading "Sweet Valley High" and adult series romances, there will be consequences for the gender-role socialization of the reader. That is, girls will be presented with certain portrayals of women independent of and in relation to men, that due to the cumulative nature of series romance reading, might affect the gender roles readers accept for themselves. In this chapter, the manner in which gender roles are portrayed in "Sweet Valley High" and in adult series romance novels will be examined in order to suggest what teenage girls may be learning and incorporating into their own lives.

"Sweet Valley High"

Feminism

In general, feminism is sadly lacking in "Sweet Valley High" novels. When certain feminist issues or relationships are briefly presented, they are immediately and thoroughly contradicted by the action in the story. Almost half of the heroines do not exhibit any personality traits that might be considered nontraditional. Traditional characteristics, on the other hand, are evident in all of the "Sweet Valley High" novels, and in most cases, are not contradicted in any way.

Romance

Romance is the central element of not only the heroines' lives, but all of the female characters' lives. Half of the heroines conform to both elements of the traditional female role (i.e. heart and hearth), and virtually all of the heroines conform to the "heart" component. The same can be said for other female characters as well. Attracting the "right" boy, attracting any boy, getting and keeping a boyfriend, and the romantic relationships of others are almost exclusively what the girls in the novels think or talk about. Even those girls with little or no first-hand experience have romance as the organizing element of their lives. When in a romantic relationship, that relationship usually has priority--other relationships may fall by the wayside. In fact, romance is frequently the object of conflicts among friends and with family. Almost half of the books feature heroines who have an explicitly-mentioned goal related to romance.

Career

Career goals are also explicitly mentioned by almost half of the heroines, along with many of the other adolescent female characters. Careers for women are a natural assumption of the characters in "Sweet Valley High", and the majority of adult female characters are employed outside the home. For example, the central characters' mother, Mrs. Wakefield, is the owner of a successful interior design firm. Although careers for women are presumed, however, the adult female characters receive more recognition for their traditionally feminine roles of wife, mother, and homemaker.

Adult males, on the other hand, are recognized for their career roles. For example, Mr. Wakefield is a partner in a successful law firm, and his career frequently plays a role in the plot.

Education

Education is essentially ignored by the characters of "Sweet Valley High". Although career goals are mentioned by almost half of the heroines and many of the other female characters, these goals are not explicitly related to education. None of the heroines, in fact, mention any educational goals. One of the Wakefield twins, Elizabeth, does very well in school and has plans for becoming a writer or journalist, but even she does not mention plans for post-secondary education. She is an honours student and devotes a great deal of time to schoolwork (compared to other girls in the stories), but she devotes more time to extracurricular activities, friendship, and romance.

Physical Appearance

A great deal of attention is given to physical appearance. Much detail is given to the appearance of the female characters, and their choices of clothes, hairstyles, and makeup. These are also things the female characters take notice of in others. The physical appearance of adult women in the novels is also given much detail. In all ten books analyzed, there is at least one detailed reference to Mrs. Wakefield's beauty and the fact that she looks like the twins' sister rather than their mother.

Women in Relation to Men

The girls in these novels are in general, portrayed more

negatively in comparison to the boys. The female characters are usually of lesser strength than the male characters. The hero is stronger than the heroine in most of the books, and there are no books in which the heroine is stronger than the hero.

In addition, the female characters usually hold much more traditional gender role attitudes than the male characters. The female characters perceive different roles for males and females, and different behaviours as acceptable for males and females. The male characters, in general, hold egalitarian gender-role attitudes and even express preferences for nontraditional traits in women.

What are adolescent readers learning from "Sweet Valley High"? They are learning the overwhelming importance of men and romance. Because romance is the key element to happiness, physical appearance is also extremely important. Careers are a part of life, but not an important part, and certainly not as important as romance. Education is portrayed as inconsequential to life, and unrelated to future satisfaction or careers. Feminist issues are not perceived as applicable to their lives, and approval leans toward a traditional gender-role orientation. Basically, girls who read "Sweet Valley High" are learning that heart and hearth should be the central organizing elements of their lives.

Adult Series Romances

Feminism

Surface attempts at portraying feminism are found throughout adult series romances. Issues of independence, identity, choice, and equality with men are central--on the surface. That is,

although these issues are presented, they are usually contradicted by the action in the story, or are contained within traditional institutions and relationships (i.e. within a romantic relationship or within traditional gender roles and relations). Traditional characteristics are frequently contradicted, but usually by the heroine's assertion or narrative assertions rather than by the action in the story. Nontraditional characteristics are reliably and thoroughly contradicted by the action. Issues of feminism become even more surface-level as the story progresses, with a trend toward the traditional; the heroine loses much of her personal power and independence as her relationship with the hero develops.

Romance

Romance is not something that is as actively sought in adult series romances as in "Sweet Valley High". The traditional female role of heart and hearth is not distinctively followed. Most of the heroines show mixed orientations toward heart and hearth, sometimes conforming to related elements and sometimes not. Similarly, some heroines express a desire for marriage and/or children and some do not. Those who do express such a desire frequently express it in a theoretical sense, with a futuristic perspective. In fact, most of the heroines enter into relationships with the heroes reluctantly. Once in the relationship, however, romance becomes more important; some of the heroines even express the explicit goal of making the hero fall in love with and commit to her. Sexuality is a definitive component

of heterosexual relationships, and in the end, sex becomes equated with love and commitment, becoming a sign of love.

Career

Throughout most of the novels, the heroine's career is far more important to her than is romance. All ten heroines have careers, usually in positions of power where they are their own bosses. In most of the books, her career is extremely important, comprising the central component of her identity. Typically she is very dedicated and hardworking, and devotes most of her time to her career. In almost all instances, the heroine continues her career after marriage. In some cases, in fact, after marriage the heroine changes careers, to something she has always wanted to try but never has actually done.

Education

The majority of the heroines in adult series romances are college-educated; almost half of all the heroines have graduate degrees (three with PhD's). The stories make a strong link between the heroines' careers and educational preparation. It is made explicit that the careers they have chosen require extensive education.

Physical Appearance

Adult series romances feature heroines who do not devote much time to their appearance--clothes, hair, or makeup. Even without conscious effort, however, they still appear beautiful. They usually do not recognize their own beauty, nor do they particularly care about it--they are inadvertently attractive. The hero always

recognizes the heroine's beauty at first glance, regardless of her clothes, hairstyle, or makeup. Even a heroine who is not traditionally beautiful is somehow devastatingly attractive.

Women in Relation to Men

In terms of careers, the heroes and heroines are of approximately equal power and status. Personally, however, the hero is much stronger. He is usually of a higher personal status, holds more personal power with others, is older, and has more money. In the romantic relationship with the heroine, he has virtually all of the power, controlling the nature and direction of the relationship for most of the story. Where the heroine has the power in the romantic relationship is in finally convincing the hero to commit to her. In the end, her terms of the relationship become his terms.

The heroine is much more egalitarian regarding gender-role attitudes than is the hero, who is quite egalitarian regarding the public sphere, but very traditional regarding the private sphere. She is typically more educated (formally), but he is portrayed as more intelligent (naturally).

Overall, what are teenage readers learning from adult series romances? They certainly learn the importance and desirability of high career goals, and the educational preparation required for them. They learn that it is perfectly natural, as well as possible, for women to succeed in any occupational field they choose, and that men will respect them for it. Unfortunately, they also learn the inevitability and naturalness of a traditional

orientation to the private--personal power, romance, and sexuality--where the hero is dominant (and the heroine ends up liking it).

Both "Sweet Valley High" and adult series romances expound the importance of romance and developing a relationship. In "Sweet Valley High" the female characters actively seek romance. Readers are therefore learning that romance is important enough to devote as much time and attention to as possible in seeking it. The heroines of adult series romances do not actively seek romance. In fact, most of their time is devoted to careers. When they do inevitably encounter romance, however, it somehow makes their lives complete. From this, readers are learning that love is not something you can find through the overt methods used by the female characters in "Sweet Valley High", for example. Rather, love is something that is controlled by fate, chance, or God. When and where you least expect it, you will be brought together with your soul mate. Life is incomplete without love, even though you might not realize it, and when true love arrives, the emptiness you never knew existed will be filled. "You can have it all" as long as you meet Mr. Right.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The goal of this research, as stated at the outset, was to find possible explanations for the noticeably declined presence of adolescent series romance novels in the marketplace in the span of less than a decade. After a remarkable debut in 1980, by 1990 only one teen series romance line was still available in bookstores, and three more were available through Scholastic's Teenage Bookclub. Comparing the content of different types of romance novels to the social milieu of adolescent girls in the 1980s led to the conclusion that issues of sexuality may have been central in the decline of the adolescent series romance novel. The greater role played by sexuality in North American society, for example in popular culture, is one factor that made sexuality a more prominent component of adolescents' lives during the 1980s. The second factor is the greater experience of parental divorce by that generation of adolescents, which among girls, has been found to contribute to almost obsessive concerns about sexuality and their future regarding heterosexual relationships. Adolescent series romance novels did not accommodate these social changes; they had a tendency to deny sexuality as a whole, and did nothing to address future heterosexual concerns, particularly concerns about the sex-love link. "Sweet Valley High", which is an adolescent soap opera series romance line, and adult series romance novels of the 1980s did incorporate issues of sexuality into their content, and were able to address concerns such as the sex-love link. Thus, it

is suggested that adolescent girls, as the decade progressed, increasingly turned to those popular cultural forms for vicarious need fulfillment and problem-solving.

The potential consequences of the suggested reading changes for the gender role socialization of adolescent readers is the maintenance of the traditional female role's focus on love, romance, and finding Mr. Right. The underlying message is still that love makes a woman's otherwise incomplete life complete.

Because this study is exploratory, there are some limitations, particularly considering the methodology employed. Content analysis can be somewhat subjective. Not everyone reading these novels, for example, might perceive contradictions in the feminist issues presented. Some readers might disagree on whether the heroine conformed to heart and hearth. What this analysis was able to do is describe how issues of gender <u>might be perceived</u> by readers, and what messages <u>might be received</u> by readers. This research is unable to determine whether the suggestions made are what readers are <u>actually</u> perceiving, or whether the readers are <u>actually</u> receiving these messages. This research provides suggestions. Only the readers themselves can say what characteristics they see in the plot. Only through a reader analysis is it possible to determine what messages they are actually receiving from romance novels. What the readers see in the novels is what is of the utmost importance--this research suggests what they <u>might</u> be seeing and <u>why</u>.

A continuation in this area might use the suggestions made in

this research as a framwork for an audience analysis. For example, surveys or interviews might be done with adolescent girls regarding their romantic reading habits and their attitudes toward romance, education, and careers. Surveys or interviews might also be done with adult women who were in the target age group (i.e. 12-14) in the early 1980s when adolescent series romance novels appeared on the market; analysis of this group could examine their paths of romantic reading behaviour and choices during the course of the 1980s.

In general, although this research has suggested some answers to questions of gender role socialization and adolescent popular culture consumption, it also raises additional questions. The study of this field is recent and filled with possibilities. The importance of future research cannot be denied. Today's adolescent girls will be socializing agents for subsequent generations of adolescent girls and boys; thus, what today's adolescents are learning will ultimately be part of what future generations of adolescents will be learning.

Table 1.1: Does the story portray feminism within traditional institutions and relationships?

	Failed	Sweet Dreams (SD)	Sweet Valley High (SVH)	Adult
Yes	0	6	2	4
No	1	2	1	2
n/a[a]	8	2	7	4
	9	10	10	10

[a]not applicable because feminism is not portrayed to any extent.

Table 1.2: Are the heroine's nontraditional characteristics shown primarily through her actions or through narrative assertions?

	Failed	SD	SVH	Adult
Assertions	0	3	1	4
Actions	4	6	5	5
n/a[a]	5	1	4	1
	9	10	10	10

[a]not applicable because the heroine has no explicitly nontraditional characteristics.

Table 1.3: Are the feminist relationships, institutions, and issues contradicted by the action depicted in the story?

	Failed	SD	SVH	Adult
Yes	3	5	3	8
No	1	4	2	2
n/a	5	1	5	0
	9	10	10	10

Table 1.4: Are the traditional characteristics contradicted by the heroine's actions or narrative assertions?

	Failed	SD	SVH	Adult
Yes	5	2	2	6
No	4	8	8	4
	9	10	10	10

NORMATIVE CONCEPTS

Table 2.1: Characters' attitudes toward gender roles (hero:heroine).

	Failed	SD	SVH	Adult
Traditional	2:3	1:1	0:1	4:1
Egalitarian	3:3	8:8	1:0	4:7
Mixed	4:3	1:1	9:9	2:2
	9	10	10	10

Table 2.2: Relative strength/weakness of the hero and heroine.

	Failed	SD	SVH	Adult
Heroine stronger	1	1	0	2
Hero stronger	3	5	6	7
Equal	4	4	3	1
Other	1[a]	0	1[b]	0
	9	10	10	10

[a]For most of the story the heroine is stronger, but by the end the hero is the stronger character.

[b]The relative strength of the hero and heroine is unclear.

Table 2.3: Does the hero conform to the traditional male role--No Sissy Stuff, the Big Wheel, the Sturdy Oak, Give 'em Hell?

	Failed	SD	SVH	Adult
Yes--4/4	1	0	1	8
Yes--3/4	1	1	0	1
Yes--2/4	0	2	1	1
Yes--1/4	3	2	3	0
No--0/4	4	5	5	0
	9	10	10	10

Table 2.4: Does the heroine conform to the traditional female gender role of heart and hearth?

	Failed	SD	SVH	Adult
Yes	5	5	5	3
No	2	2	1	2
Mixed	2	3	4	5
	9	10	10	10

KINSHIP SYSTEMS

Table 3.1: Roles of children in the home, based on gender (teen novels only).

	Failed[a]		SD		SVH	
	Hero	Heroine	Hero	Heroine	Hero	Heroine
Traditional	0	5	0	3	0	4
Nontraditional	0	0	1	0	1	0
Not mentioned	8	3	9	7	9	6
	8	8	10	10	10	10

[a]n=8 for the failed lines because in one of the books the hero and heroine no longer live at home.

Table 3.2a: Familial social status (hero:heroine).

	Failed	SD	SVH	Adult
Upper-class	0:0	1:0	1:1	4:2
Upper-middle-class	2:2	3:3	1:6	0:0
Middle-class	3:5	4:5	3:1	1:1
Lower-middle-class	1:0	0:2	0:0	1:2
Working-class	3:2	1:0	1:1	2:1
Unknown	0:0	0:0	4:1	2:4
	9	10	10	10

Table 3.2b: Comparative familial social status.

	Failed	SD	SVH	Adult
Hero higher status	0	2	2	3
Heroine higher status	2	2	3	2
Equal status	7	6	1	1
Unknown	0	0	4	4
	9	10	10	10

Table 3.3: Does the hero or heroine have any siblings?

	Failed		SD		SVH		Adult	
	Hero	Heroine	Hero	Heroine	Hero	Heroine	Hero	Heroine
Yes	3	3	4	5	2	6	5	1
No	5	5	3	4	4	1	3	6
Unknown	1	1	3	1	4	3	2	3
	9	9	10	10	10	10	10	10

Table 3.4: Are/were there any role model women for the heroine?

	Failed	SD	SVH	Adult
Yes	3	3	1	1
No	6	7	9	9
	9	10	10	10

Table 3.5: Does the hero or heroine have any children? (adult novels only)

	Hero	Heroine
Yes	0	1
No	10	9
	10	10

Table 3.6: Marital status (adult novels only).

	Hero	Heroine
Single	7	8
Divorced	2	1
Widowed	0	0
Married[a]	1	1
	10	10

[a]Married to each other at the start of the story.

Table 3.7: Does the hero or heroine express a desire for marriage and/or children? (adult novels only).

	Hero	Heroine
Marriage	2	2
Children	1	0
Marriage & Children	2	4
Neither	5	4
	10	10

SUBJECTIVE IDENTITIES

Table 4.1a: Degree of romantic experience.

	Failed		SD		SVH		Adult	
	Hero	Heroine	Hero	Heroine	Hero	Heroine	Hero	Heroine
None	0	3	1	5	0	2	0	1
Limited	1	3	2	2	3	4	1	7
Extensive	3	2	0	0	1	3	7	1
Unknown	5	1	7	3	6	1	2	1
	9	9	10	10	10	10	10	10

Table 4.1b: Comparative degree of romantic experience.

	Failed	SD	SVH	Adult
Hero more	2	0	2	6
Heroine more	0	0	1	0
Both limited	0	2	1	1
Both extensive	2	0	0	1
Both none	0	1	0	0
Unknown	5	7	6	2
	9	10	10	10

Table 4.2: Does the hero or heroine have a job outside of school? (teen novels only)

	Failed[a]		SD		SVH	
	Hero	Heroine	Hero	Heroine	Hero	Heroine
Yes	6	5	6	4	1	0
No	1	3	3	5	8	10
Unknown	1	0	1	1	1	0
	8	8	10	10	10	10

[a]one book features characters who are finished school and work full-time.

Table 4.3: Is the heroine's rebellion against male authority childish?

	Failed	SD	SVH	Adult
Yes	0	0	0	5
No	0	1	1	4
n/a[a]	9	9	9	1
	9	10	10	10

[a]not applicable because of no rebellion against male authority.

Table 4.4: Does the heroine sacrifice part of herself at the end of the story?

	Failed	SD	SVH	Adult
Yes	0	2	0	2
No	9	8	10	8
	9	10	10	10

Table 4.5: Nature of the romantic conflict.

	Failed	SD	SVH	Adult
Heroine's misperceptions	4	3	3	9
Hero's misperceptions	0	2	3	1
Mutual misperceptions	2	4	2	0
No conflict	3	1	1	0
Other	0	0	1[a]	0
	9	10	10	10

[a]The hero leaves town and the heroine decides not to go with him.

Table 4.6: Age of the hero and heroine (adult novels only).

	Hero	Heroine
Early 20s	0	1
Late 20s	0	8
Early 30s	2	1
Late 30s	5	0
40s	1	0
Unknown	2[a]	0
	10	10

[a]The hero is described as being "older" then the heroine.

Table 4.7a: Current social status (adult novels only).

	Hero	Heroine
upper-class	9	3
upper-middle-class	1	3
middle-class	0	2
lower-middle-class	0	2
working-class	0	0
	10	10

Table 4.7b: Comparative current social status (adult novels only).

	n
Heroine is of a higher status	1
Hero is of a higher status	7
Hero and heroine are of an equal status	2
	10

Table 4.8: Educational attainment (adult novels only).

	Hero	Heroine
High School	3	1
College	1	3
Master's degree	0	1
Doctorate	1	3
Unknown	5	2
	10	10

Table 4.9: Is the relationship entered into freely or reluctantly on the part of the hero and heroine (adult novels only)?

	Hero	Heroine
Freely	7	2
Reluctantly	3	8
	10	10

Table 4.10: Is there a basic mistrust of the opposite sex (adult novels only)?

	Hero	Heroine
Yes	3	4
No	7	6
	10	10

Table 4.11: Who initiates the initial relationship (adult novels only)?

	n
Hero	7
Heroine	1
Mutual	1
Third party	1
	10

Table 4.12: Who resolves the conflict at the end of the story (adult novels only)?

	n
Hero	7
Heroine	1
Mutual	2
	10

TERRITORY

Table 5.1: Whose territory does the story take place in?

	Failed	SD	SVH	Adult
Hero's	1	2	0	5
Heroine's	4	2	1	2
Mutual	3	5	9	1
Neither	1	1	0	2
	9	10	10	10

SEXUALITY

Table 6.1: Is contraception or safe sex addressed (adult novels only)?

	n
Yes	5
No	5
	10

Table 6.2: Does the heroine become pregnant at the end of the story? (adult novels only)

	n
Yes	1
No	9
	10

Table 6.3: Who controls the characters' sexual encounters (adult novels only)?

	n
Hero	6
Heroine	2
Mutual	2
	10

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Appendix

Romance Novels Analyzed

"Failed" Adolescent Series Romances

1. Deborah Kent (June, 1982). That special summer. "First Love from Silhouette".

In this story, the heroine's family runs a summer lake resort. When the tourist season begins, she meets a tall, handsome, wealthy boy, one of the "popular" crowd, and is flattered when he shows interest in her. She soon realizes, however, that he chases all the girls at the lake, and really is not interested in her. She then realizes that her feelings for a local boy, who has been her best friend since childhood, are more than feelings of friendship; he has been interested in her for years. They begin a romantic relationship.

2. June Masters Bacher (1984). Until there was you. "Rhapsody Romance".

The young-adult heroine goes on a cruise after learning she has an inoperable brain tumor. She meets a dark, mysterious young man, and they fall in love at first sight. They both think that the future is hopeless, however, because of her brain tumor and because he is a fugitive. At the end, a miraculous experimental treatment saves her life, and the law realizes he was falsely accused for his crime. They live happily ever after.

3. Helane Zelger (December, 1984). Ski bum. "Caprice Romance".

The heroine and her family go on a Christmas ski vacation, where she begins a relationship with a handsome, athletic, popular boy, while rejecting an unpopular, clumsy boy. When her younger brother is lost in a blizzard, however, it is the latter who helps find him; she realizes she was wrong in her initial perceptions of him, and begins to date him.

4. Carol Beach York (April, 1985). Make a wish. "Heart to Heart".

This is the story of a girl who has long worshipped from afar the most popular boy in school. After years of him seeing her as a "friend", he finally asks her out on a date.

5. Carol Beach York (June, 1985). A likely story. "Heart to Heart".

At the end of summer vacation, the heroine "creates" a boyfriend in order to impress her friends at school. She then meets a new boy at school who she really likes, but she has an

"imaginary" boyfriend to consider. At the end of the story, she confesses to him about her lie, and they live happily ever after.

6. Sheary Suiter (September, 1985). The right kind of guy. "Caprice Romance".

The heroine, a nice but quiet girl must compete with a glamorous, popular girl for the new boy's attention. In the end, "nice", rather than "glamorous", wins the hero's heart.

7. Candice Ransom (February, 1986). Blackbird keep. "First Love from Silhouette".

While the heroine is vacationing at her uncle's house, mysterious things begin occurring, such as locked rooms being opened and valuable belongings being stolen. The heroine discovers them to be the doings of the handsome, romantic boy she has recently met; upon realizing her discovery, this boy tries to kill her. A friendly local boy saves her life.

8. Brenda Cote (May, 1986). Tomorrow and tomorrow. "First Love from Silhouette".

The heroine becomes interested in the tough, rebellious new boy at school. At first she refuses to get involved with him, knowing the importance of socializing with the "right" crowd. Eventually, however, she realizes he has been misunderstood, and dates him after all.

9. Carrie Lewis (March, 1987). Up in the air. "First Love from Silhouette".

The hero crashes his hot air balloon near the heroine's family's cottage, unable to remember who he is. The heroine helps him to solve the mystery.

"Sweet Dreams" Adolescent Series Romances

10. Barbara Conklin (September, 1981). P. S. I love you.

While housesitting with her mother in Palm Springs, she falls in love with a local boy. At the end of the story, he dies of leukemia.

11. Suzanne Rand (May, 1984). Just like the movies.

Some of the teenagers in a small town get to play extras in a movie that is being filmed there during the summer. The heroine, suddenly, is given a part with the "hero" of the movie. She thinks that he is interested in her, and even breaks up with her boyfriend, only to realize that she was mistaken--the hero of the movie is married. After a great deal of apologizing, her boyfriend forgives her.

12. Deborah Kent (January, 1985). Ten-speed summer.

While on a youth cycling trip across the country, the heroine develops a relationship with a boy also on the trip. At the end of the story he tells her she was only a summer fling--he has a steady girlfriend. She decides that it was better to have loved and lost than to never have loved at all.

13. Julie Winfield (November, 1986). Private eyes.

When football equipment is stolen from the school, the heroine, who wants to be a private investigator, decides to solve the mystery. The hero, a new boy of questionable reputation, helps her in her task--they fall in love during the process.

14. Janice Boies (January, 1988). Heart and soul.

The heroine's father is in a 1960s rock band that is now making a comeback. A boy she is interested in suddenly becomes interested in her, but she thinks it is because of his interest in her father's band. Of course, she is mistaken, and love blooms.

15. Jahnna Beecham (July, 1988). Practice makes perfect.

When a new boy comes to school, the heroine immediately thinks he and her best friend would be a perfect match, and tries to set them up. During the process she realizes that she is interested in him herself, and he is interested in her.

16. Judy Baer (July, 1988). Riddles of love.

After her grandfather's death, the heroine is left with a series of riddles she must solve in order to find a hidden "treasure". Her grandfather's young neighbour, a boy she has never liked, must help her. Together, they solve the riddles, find the treasure, and become friends.

17. Laurie Lykken (April, 1990). Rock 'n' roll sweetheart.

The heroine has a crush on the lead singer of a local band, and is excited when they hire her as a co-singer and songwriter. After getting to know the lead singer, she sees his true colors, and her crush ends. She then realizes her feelings for her "goofy" neighbour, and they fall in love.

18. Susan Jo Wallach (June, 1990). Acting on impulse.

While on a class trip to England, the heroine hopes to gain a classmate's interest, even creating a new personality to please him when he does not like her own. An English boy shows his interest in her just the way she is, and they then fall in love.

19. June O' Connell (July, 1991). Time out for love.

The heroine is torn between her time-consuming aspirations of becoming a gymnast, and devoting time to her boyfriend. In the end, she realizes that by devoting time to her athletic goals, she gains even more of the hero's love and respect.

"Sweet Valley High" Adolescent Soap Opera Series Romances--created by Francine Pascal.

20. Double love. (#1).

The Wakefield twins are both interested in the new boy at school. The "bad" twin is willing to do anything, even sacrifice her relationship with her sister, to attract him. Because of that, the hero is not attracted to her, and instead is attracted to the "good" twin.

21. Heart breaker. (#8).

Shy, quiet DeeDee is interested in the new boy at school. Unfortunately, so is beautiful, popular Jessica. DeeDee thinks all hope is lost, but in the end, she "wins".

22. Racing hearts. (#9).

Roger has always had a crush on wealthy, popular Lila, who finally pays attention to him when he becomes the school track star. He soon realizes that it is his status she loves, not him. Then he suddenly notices the shy, quiet girl who has been patiently waiting for his attention.

23. When love dies. (#12).

The heroine breaks up with the hero after she learns that she is dying--she does not want to burden him. He finally finds out the truth, and they spend the last of her days together.

24. Runaway. (#21).

Jessica runs away at her "rebel" boyfriend's urging, after feeling that her family cares for her "good" twin more than her. Her family finds her and convinces her to come home.

25. Too much in love. (#22).

Bill breaks up with DeeDee when he senses her becoming too dependent on him. She soon realizes her error, rediscovers her identity, and is rewarded with Bill's love once again.

26. Taking sides. (#31).

Jessica and Liz each try to matchmake their best friends with the new boy in school. Liz, the "good" twin, succeeds, and her shy, quiet friend gains his interest.

27. Out of control. (#35).

Liz and her boyfriend are at odds over the effects of his best friend's temper tantrums. Liz is finally proven right, and her boyfriend asks her forgiveness, which she grants.

28. In love again. (#59).

When Liz's old boyfriend moves back to Sweet Valley, she is confused--she has a new boyfriend. But her love for her old boyfriend never died, and they rekindle their flame.

29. Who's who? (#62).

Jessica meets two young men through a dating service, and creates two new personalities to attract them. She is found out, but then meets a boy who likes her as she is.

Adult Series Romances

30. Thea Lovan (November, 1982). Passionate journey. "Silhouette Desire".

A long-estranged aunt invites the heroine to visit her in Morocco. When the heroine arrives, she discovers she supposedly "consented" to marry her aunt's stepson. They despise each other; he thinks she is a gold-digger. He realizes his misperception at the end, they fall in love, and live happily ever after.

31. Roberta Dennis (April, 1983). Between the lines. "Silhouette Desire".

The heroine, a new reporter, has repeated clashes with her editor. They do, however, fall in love and live happily ever after.

32. Nora Powers (November, 1983). Dream of the west. "Silhouette Desire".

While writing a book on Western artists, the heroine meets the handsome, wealthy owner of a private art collection. They fall in love and live happily ever after.

33. Laurel Evans (May, 1986). Designing heart. "Silhouette Desire".

The hero and heroine meet while working on a play together. She does not want to get involved for fear of damaging her

professional reputation, but he convinces her to. They live happily ever after.

34. Joyce Theis (April, 1987). Spellbound. "Silhouette Desire".

The hero is a client of the heroine's, a hypnotherapist. They fall in love, and live happily ever after.

35. Jayne Ann Krentz (November, 1987). Test of time. "Harlequin Temptation".

The hero and heroine have recently married, but more as a professional convenience on his part. She must convince him of his "love" for her. She succeeds and they live happily ever after.

36. Jayne Ann Krentz (October, 1989). Lady's choice. "Harlequin Temptation".

After their first sexual encounter, the heroine tries to convince the hero to marry her. She succeeds and they live happily ever after.

37. Barbara Delinsky (December, 1989). Montana man. "Harlequin Temptation".

The heroine, a single mother, is stranded in a blizzard with the hero, who is a stranger. He saves the lives of her and her baby. They fall in love and live happily ever after.

38. Renee Roszel (December, 1989). Legendary lover. "Harlequin Temptation".

The hero and heroine had one sexual encounter as teenagers, thirteen years earlier. He now appears as a guest at the hotel she runs. After repeated conflicts, they fall in love and live happily ever after.

39. Lass Small (May, 1991). No trespassing allowed. "Silhouette Desire".

The heroine arrives, claiming entitlement to a piece of the hero's ranch. They gradually develop a sexual relationship, then a friendship, and finally the heroine convinces the commitment-shy hero to marry her.